CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REPORT

2023–2026 / 2026–2029

SCOTTISH BORDERS

Children and Young People's Planning Partnership

What's Inside

1. Welcome 03
2. Rights — what are they and what do they mean? 04
3. Children's Rights — Taking Action, Who? What? Where? When? and How? 10

4. The Scottish Borders Context 14
5. Where we were with children's rights
   What we said we would do nexT 00

6. What have we achieved? 24
7. Other work that has been happening in the Borders 96
8. Listening to you... What will we do next? 97

9. What you have to say 103
10. Messages from Decision Makers 104
11. Want more information? How to contact us or get involved 00

12. Appendix A — Children's Rights Posters 108
13. Appendix B — Organisations that focus on children's rights 110
14. Appendix C — The Promise 112
15. Appendix D — Nicotine Prevention Toolkit Case Study 113
16. Appendix E — UNCRC Newsletter 123

1. Welcome to Your Children's Rights Report

Hello and welcome! This is your Children's Rights Report for the Scottish Borders. It has been written for children and young people, to show you how the Council, the NHS and its partners are working to respect, protect, and support your rights in everyday life.

Children's rights are the things that every child and young person under the age of 18 is entitled to, just because you are a child. They are about being safe, being treated fairly, being heard, and having the chance to learn, play, and grow. For young people up to 25 who are Care Experienced (this means you might have lived with foster carers, in a children's home, with a family member who isn't your mum or dad, or received support from social workers), your rights are also protected to make sure you are supported as you become an adult.

This report explains

- what has already been done to improve children's rights,
- where we are now,
- and what we plan to do next.

It is for all children and young people across the Scottish Borders, including those in school, college, care, or living in our communities. Most importantly, it is about your voices, your experiences, and your rights, and how adults with responsibility for services must listen to you and act in your best interests.



2. RIGHTS

What are they and what do they mean?

Children's Rights are a list of promises that children and young people have as soon as they are born. They are the same rights that adults have — human rights, but there are also a few more.

Throughout history, we know that opportunities, experiences and protections for young people were different. Some children didn't get to go to school, children were often seen as small adults, they would work alongside adults in unsafe conditions and were viewed as cheap labour or property.

Then something we call a 'treaty' (a binding formal agreement, a bit like a contract or written instruction) came along to help protect children and young people — The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or UNCRC. This treaty is a list of promises made by almost every country in the world to make sure all children are treated fairly, kept safe, and can be happy and healthy.

These promises are called children's rights, and they say what children need to grow up well.

They work like special rules to make sure:

YOU ARE SAFE AND CARED FOR —

for example you have the right to live in a safe home and be protected from harm.

YOU CAN LEARN AND GROW —

you have the right to go to school, play, and be the best you can be.

YOU CAN SPEAK UP —

you have the right to share your ideas and have adults listen to what you think.

YOU ARE TREATED EQUALLY —

it doesn't matter where you're from, what you look like or what you believe — everyone has the same rights.



Here our young people in the Borders explain Children's Rights: You have rights!

In this treaty there are 54 different articles, each article is a short statement that explains a right that all children and young people have, such as UNCRC Article 31.



The articles cover lots of different parts of children's lives — like family life, school, health, play, and having a say in decisions that affect you.

Some articles explain your rights (1 to 42), and others explain what adults, organisations and governments must do to protect and support those rights (43–54).

Together, the 54 articles help make sure children and young people are respected, protected and supported, wherever they live. See the full list of Articles in Appendix A



In this video some students in the Scottish Borders explain what some of your rights are:
Gala pupils explaining some of the rights we have

For further information on the UNCRC, there are 5 videos broken down by the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast. Click the links below to watch.

UNCRC (Part 1) Where did it come from?

UNCRC (Part 2) Who is Who?

UNCRC (Part 3) What does the UNCRC say?

UNCRC (Part 4) How is it made real?

UNCRC (Part 5) Why it matters

Who are rights for and how do we get them?

UNICEF explain who rights are for and how you get them through the ABCDE of rights.

abc

THE UNICEF ABCDE OF RIGHTS

a



UNIVERSAL
This means rights are for **all** children and young people across the world.

b



INHERENT
This means you are **born** with rights.

c



INALIENABLE

This means your rights **cannot** be given, taken away, bought or sold.

d



UNCONDITIONAL

This means that your rights **do not** come with any conditions attached and are not linked to responsibilities as they are not earnt.

e



INDIVISIBLE

This means **every** right is important in order for children and young people to survive, develop and reach their full potential. Rights are a whole package and are linked together.

3. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Taking Action:
Who? Where? When? What? and How?

Who is taking action and where?

Lots of people and groups all over Scotland are working to make sure children's rights are respected:

Nationally — The Scottish Government, UNICEF UK, and other organisations focus on children's rights like Together Scotland, the Improvement Service, Young Scot, Children's Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament along with the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland. **See Appendix B** for further information



Locally — Scottish Borders Council, schools, health services, the fire service, the police, and local youth groups all work together to help protect your rights. These groups are called duty bearers because they have a duty to look after your rights. Sometimes they are also called human rights defenders.

Anyone who works for the government has the responsibility to make sure you are safe, listened to, treated fairly, and that your rights are always respected.

- **Children and young people** — You! Through groups like the **Champions Board**, school councils, Divergent Perspectives and other participation groups

- **Other local groups** — Clubs, community organisations, and the Children and Young People's Planning Partnership (CYPPP), which brings together organisations that work with children in the Borders and make decisions which ensure children and young people grow up feeling loved, safe and respected.



All these services in the Scottish Borders work together to make sure every child and young person is safe, supported and treated fairly. Some people work with you directly — like teachers, youth workers and health staff — and others help behind the scenes. But no matter what their job is, they all share the same responsibility: to protect your rights and help you grow, learn and reach your full potential.

When?

Scotland has been supporting children's rights through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) since the UK signed it in 1991 but children in Scotland wanted it to be part of law not just a signed contract. So, they made sure their voices were heard, they campaigned along with young people's organisations and in March 2021 Scottish Parliament passed a bill. However, the UK Supreme Court ruled that changes need to be made to it. The necessary changes were made and finally it was given royal assent (approved by the King) in January 2024 and officially became part of Scots law 6 months later.



NOVEMBER 1989

Convention on the Rights of the Child is devloped by the UN.

DECEMBER 1991

UNCRC is ratified by the UK government.





JUNE 1999

Scottish Youth Parliament is launched.

OCTOBER 2017

A group of Scottish Youth MPs launch the youth-led Right Here Right Now campaign, calling for children's rights to be incorporated into domestic law.







APRIL 2019

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announces plans to incorporate the UNCRC into Scottish law.

MARCH 2021

Scottish Parliament unanimously votes to incorporate the UNCRC into Scottish law.

January 2024

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 receives Royal Assent and becomes law.

JULY 2024

The Act comes into force, making children's rights legally enforceable in relation to devolved public functions in Scotland and placing duties on public authorities to act compatibly with the UNCRC.

What?

This means, your rights are now protected by law. So, adults and services, everyone who works with children and young people – schools, councils, health services, police, and more must follow them. You will have more power to make sure adults listen to you and respect your rights.

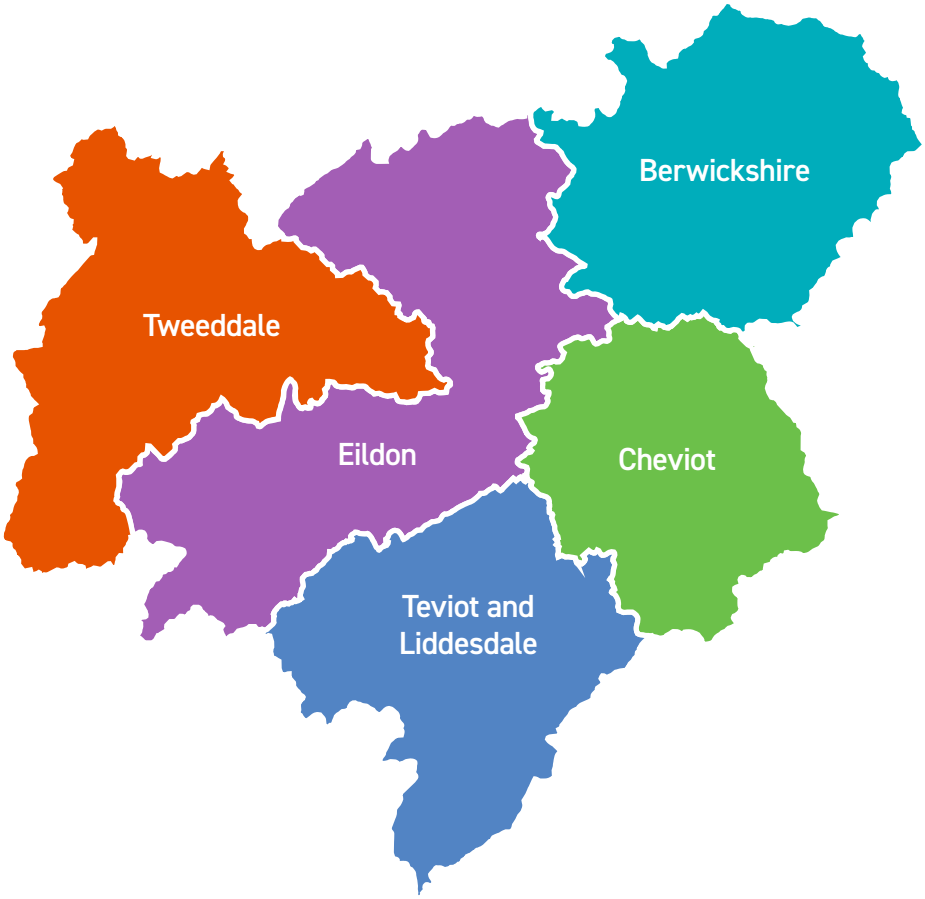
How?

How paragraph should say When decisions are made about children and young people, adults will need to check that your rights are being respected and take action if they aren't.

4. THE SCOTTISH BORDERS CONTEXT

The Scottish Borders is in the southeast of Scotland, right next to England. The River Tweed runs through the region, and it has lots of towns, countryside and coastline. It sits close to Edinburgh and the Lothians, with Dumfries and Galloway to the southwest and South Lanarkshire to the west. To the east is the North Sea, with beautiful beaches and fishing towns.

The Borders is full of history and well-loved local traditions, with festivals like the Herring Queen, Braw Lad's Gathering, Reivers Week and Common Ridings happening every year.



A long time ago, during the industrial era, the Scottish Borders was famous for making textiles. Textiles are things made from cloth or fabric — like wool, blankets, tweed and clothes. Lots of people worked in big mills where machines helped spin wool, weave fabric and create materials that were sent all over the world. The Borders became well known for its amazing wool and tweed, and towns like Hawick, Galashiels and Selkirk were buzzing with busy mills and workers.

BBC Bitesize



Pictures of the textile buildings in the Borders drawn by Nat Ferguson.



When we asked young people to describe the Scottish Borders, the weather was one of the first things everyone mentioned! Like many places in Scotland, the weather here can change really quickly — sometimes it feels like you get all four seasons in one day. Lots of young people described the Borders as cold, wet and windy, and said that talking about the weather is almost a tradition.

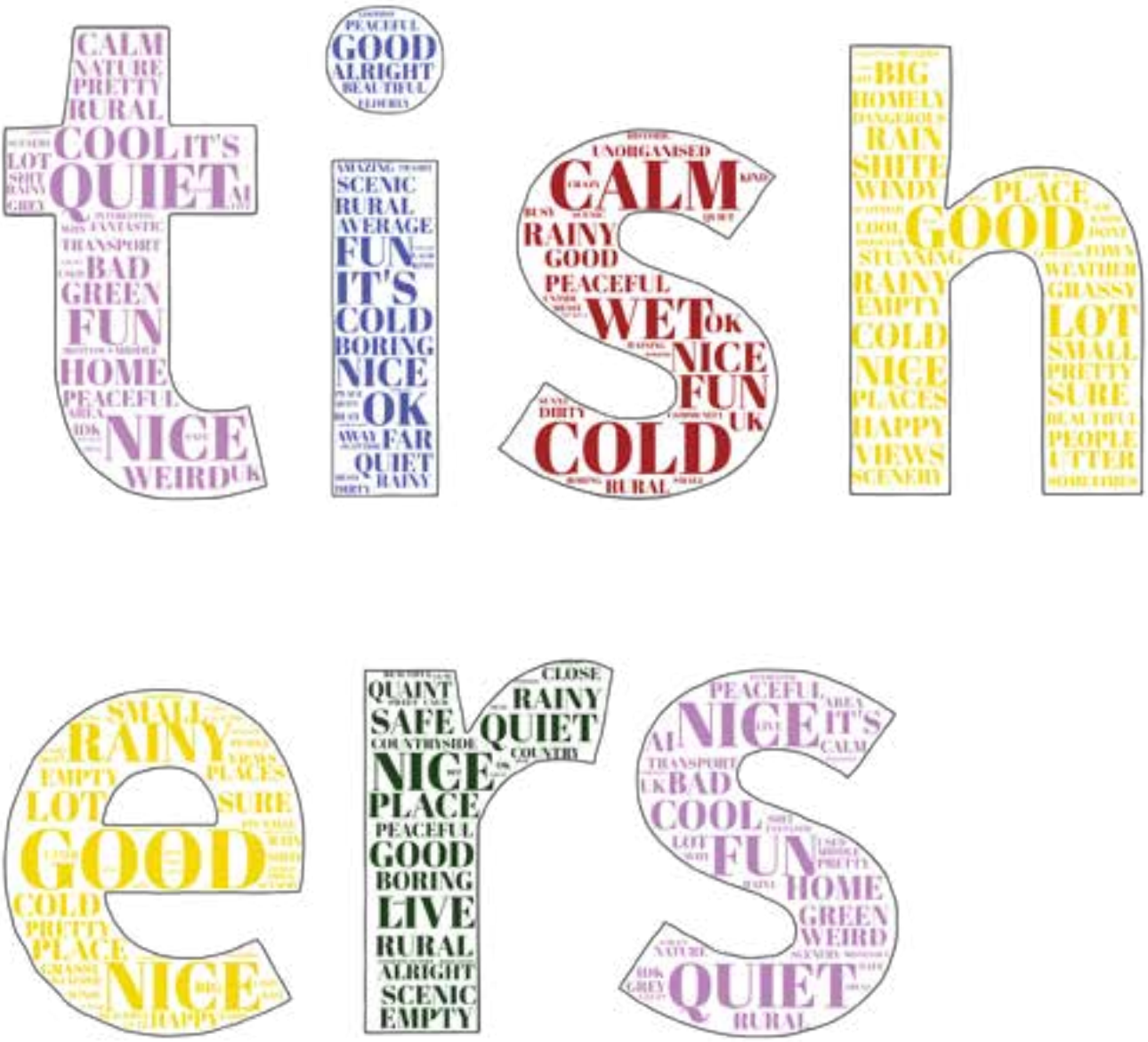
But even with the wild weather, young people also used lots of positive words to describe the Borders. The most common were "beautiful", "scenic", "safe", "historic" and "spacious". Many young people said they feel proud of the beaches, hills and green spaces, and that the area has friendly, welcoming communities.



Even though there aren't many people living in the Borders, the area itself is huge. Because everything is so spread out, some young people said they can sometimes feel a bit isolated. Things like long travel times, not having many buses, and living far away from activities can make it harder to get to places — and can sometimes lead to boredom.

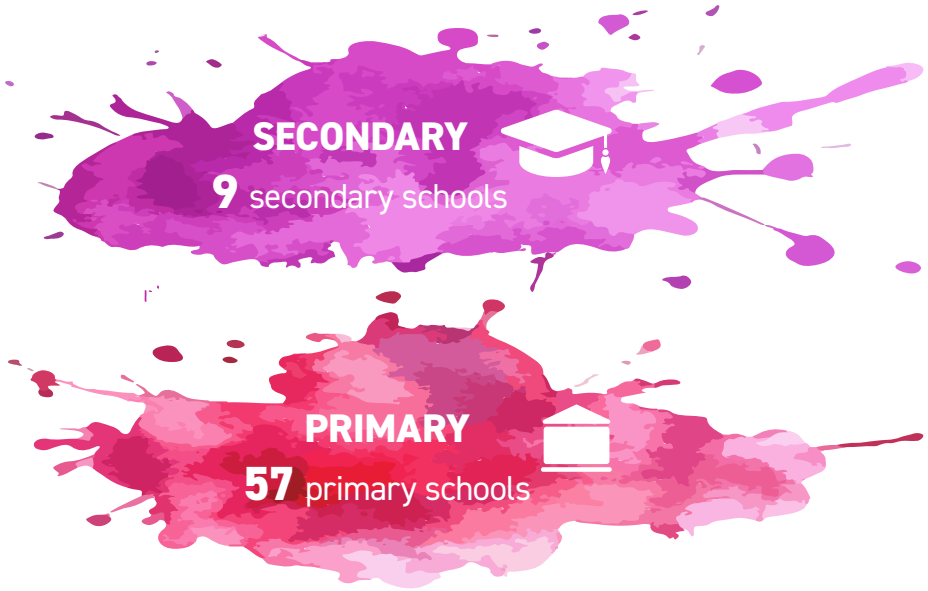
But young people also said there are big advantages to living here. Many feel very safe, enjoy the peaceful countryside, and see the stunning scenery as a special part of growing up in the Borders.

In the Borders, we have some children and young people who have come here as refugees or asylum seekers. The council is responsible for looking after them and helping them feel safe and supported. They meet together in a group called New Roots, where they can make friends, learn about the Borders and Scotland, and discover our traditions and way of life.


CALM
NATURE
PRETTY
RURAL
COOL
IT'S
QUIET
FANTASTIC
TRANSPORT
BAD
GREEN
FUN
HOME
PEACEFUL
NICE
WEIRD
PEACEFUL
GOOD
ALRIGHT
BEAUTIFUL
LUXURY
SCENIC
RURAL
AVERAGE
FUN
IT'S
COLD
BORING
NICE
OK
FAR
QUIET
RAINY
UNORGANISED
CALM
RAINY
GOOD
PEACEFUL
WET
OK
NICE
FUN
COLD
UK
RURAL
BIG
HOMELY
RAIN
SHITE
WINDY
PLACE
GOOD
STUNNING
WEATHER
RAINY
GRASSY
EMPTY
LOT
COLD
SMALL
NICE
PRETTY
PLACES
SURE
HAPPY
BEAUTIFUL
VIEWS
PEOPLE
SCENERY
UTTER
SMALL
RAINY
EMPTY
PLACES
LOT
SURE
GOOD
COLD
PRETTY
PLACE
NICE
HAPPY
QUAINT
CLOSE
RAINY
SAFE
QUIET
COUNTRYSIDE
COUNTRY
NICE
PLACE
PEACEFUL
GOOD
BORING
LIVE
RURAL
ALRIGHT
SCENIC
EMPTY
PEACEFUL
NICE
IT'S
CALM
TRANSPORT
BAD
COOL
FUN
HOME
GREEN
WEIRD
NATURE
QUIET
RURAL

Details about the Scottish Borders

In the Scottish Borders we have nine Secondary Schools and 57 Primary Schools. The secondary schools are listed here along with all the primary schools that feed into them.



SECONDARY SCHOOL
Berwickshire High School

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Earlston High School

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Eyemouth High School

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Duns, Greenlaw, Swinton, Coldstream, Chirnside

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Earlston, Gordon, Newtown, St Boswells, Melrose, Lauder, Channelkirk, Westruther

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Eyemouth, Cockburnspath, Coldingham, Ayton, Reston

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Galashiels Academy

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Hawick High School

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Jedburgh Grammar Campus

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Balmoral, Glendinning, Langlee, St Peters, Burgh, St Margaret's, Tweedbank, Clovenfords, Stow, Heriot, Fountainhall

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Drumlanrig, Trinity, Wilton, Stirches, Newcastleton, Denholm, Burnfoot

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Ancrum

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Kelso High School

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Edenside, Broomlands, Morebattle, Yetholm, Ednam, Sprouston

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Peebles High School

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Broughton, Newlands, Walkerburn, Kingsland, Priorsford, St Ronans, West Linton, Halyrude

SECONDARY SCHOOL
Selkirk High School

PRIMARY SCHOOLS
Knowepark, Philliphaugh, Lilliesleaf, Kirkhope, Yarrow

How Many Children and Young People Live Here

- Around **27,500** children and young people aged **0–24** live in the Scottish Borders.
- This is **about 1 in every 4 people** in the area

Where Children and Young People Live

- Nearly **half** of children and young people live in small places with fewer than **3,000 people**.
- About **1 in 8** children (12–13%) live more than 30 minutes away from a main town like Galashiels or Hawick.
- Some communities have poor access to services, which can make it harder to get to clubs or activities.

Age Groups

- **0–4 years:** 4,539
- **5–9 years:** 5,540
- **10–14 years:** 6,322
- **15–19 years:** 6,344
- **20–24 years:** 4,838

Births

- There were **835** babies born in 2024 – this is slightly more than last year, but overall births have been going down over time.

Children from Different Backgrounds

- Around **11.5%** of school pupils speak a main language other than English or Scots.
- Pupils speak **81** different languages.
- The most common other languages are Polish, Russian and Ukrainian.

Poverty and Support

- About **1 in 5 children (21.5%)** in the Borders live in **poverty**.
- **14.5%** of pupils get **Free School Meals**.
- **Almost 1 in 5 pupils** get a **Clothing & Footwear Grant**.
- Thousands of families get the **Scottish Child Payment** to help with costs.

Where do these numbers come from?

The facts and figures in this report come from information collected by Scottish Borders Council and partners. Some of this information is included in the **Children and Young People's Services Plan** 2026-2029, which helps us understand what life is like for children and young people in the Scottish Borders and what needs to change to make things better. You can learn more by reading the plan here: Children and Young People's Services Plan 2026-2029.

Children's Health

- More young children in the Borders go to hospital because of **accidental injuries** than the Scottish average.
- Fewer young people go to hospital because of **alcohol or drug issues**, and the rates have been improving.
- **Suicide rates** for young people have risen and are now slightly higher than the Scottish average.
- **Most babies** get their vaccinations, but some rates have dropped recently.
- More children here have **healthy teeth** and a **healthy weight** than the Scotland average.
- Fewer toddlers have **developmental concerns** compared to the Scottish average.

Developmental concerns *means someone has noticed that a child might need extra help with growing, learning, talking, moving, friendships, feelings, or everyday things.*

Education

- As of January 2026 there are **13,848 pupils** in Borders schools.
- **64%** of secondary pupils get **5 qualifications at National 5**, slightly below Scotland average.
- 38% achieve **5 Highers or more**, about the same as Scotland average.
- Children in the **most deprived areas** do not do as well in literacy and numeracy, and the **attainment gap** is bigger here than the Scottish average
- Most young people aged **16–19 (95.3%)** are in **school, training or work**, which is better than Scotland as a whole.

Children and Young People Who Need Extra Support

- Fewer children in the Borders are **looked after** compared with the Scottish average.
- Slightly more children are on the **Child Protection Register** than the Scottish average.
- Fewer children are referred to the **Children's Reporter** for concerns or offences—these rates are lower than the Scottish average and improving.
- **333 children** were in families who were homeless or nearly homeless in 2024/25.

5. WHAT WE ALREADY ACHIEVED WITH CHILDREN'S RIGHTS (2020–2023) AND WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO NEXT

By 2023, the Council and NHS Borders had made a lot of progress in respecting children's rights. More services were starting to think about children's rights when making decisions, and more children and young people were being listened to and involved in decision making.

New ways for young people to share their ideas were created, like the Champions Board and Champions Board Hubs in schools. Children were also asked what they thought about things like new play parks, new schools and changes in their communities.

During COVID, thousands of iPads were given to children and young people so they could keep learning, stay connected and get support online. Services worked together to help with health, wellbeing, family support and reducing poverty.

Adults who work with children — like teachers, youth workers, social workers and health staff — started learning more about children's rights, and leaders were reminded of their responsibilities **as duty bearers**.

Care experienced young people also had more chances to share their views and help improve services, and work had begun to keep *The Promise*. **See Appendix C** for more information on The Promise.

Overall, by 2023, the Scottish Borders had made a strong start. More people understood children's rights, more young people were being heard, and your views were beginning to shape real decisions. There was still more to do, but the foundations were in place for things to keep improving.

In our last report, Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and lots of other services said they would keep working together to help all children and young people in the Borders stay healthy, happy and safe. We made some important promises about what we would do from 2023 to 2026.

1. Grow the Champions Board
2. Train more adults about children's rights
3. Create training for staff to learn how to support children with complex needs
4. Work with children and young people to improve play spaces
5. Give young carers quicker support
6. Teach British Sign Language (BSL) in more schools
7. Include children in planning for better oral health
8. Use the new Care Opinion Monkey in NHS Borders
9. Make it easier for young people to complain if they aren't happy with a service they receive
10. Support free bus travel for under 22s
11. Create a Health Passport for hospital stays
12. Raise awareness of autism and neurodivergent needs, offer advisory support
13. Give young people a vote in local planning
14. Ask young people about sport, leisure and culture

DID WE DO IT? HERE'S WHAT WE ACHIEVED!

1 Grow The Champions Board





The Scottish Borders Champions Board is open to all care experienced young people and aims to provide a platform for young people to come together and have their voices heard. The Board creates a safe and inclusive space for young people to share their views, influence change within the care system and help make sure Corporate Parents are getting it right.

The Champions Board consists of different projects and groups such as **The Champs Participation Group**, **New Roots Group**, **Champs School Hubs** and **Champions Connect**. Each focuses on providing a range of support and each group is tailored to meet the individual needs of the young people who attend.

The Board is for care experienced young people, led by care experienced young people. Since 2023 we have continued to put young people's voices at the heart of everything the Champions Board does. For example, young people hold key roles such as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. This ensures that our Champs directly influence decisions and shape the direction the Board takes.

Another example is how the Champs involve their corporate parents in the project. They can only attend by invitation from the young people. The young people normally ask their corporate parents to send some information about themselves before they come along to the group and ask for clarity about why they want to come and visit. There is normally also a request for corporate parents to bring some food!

We have seen increased collaboration between the young people on the Board and their corporate parents over the last 12 months. Most recently, the Champs have been working on a project to create 'Fact files' about their corporate parents. This involved young people interviewing social workers, transition workers and school nurses to find out more about what they do. This project involved positive power sharing with young people creating the questions, setting up the interviews and then hosting their corporate parents at the group. This helps the Champs develop a range of skills and grow in confidence.

We now run three Champs School Hubs in secondary schools across the Borders. The school hubs are designed to provide participation opportunities for young people within their own school, taking away the need for them to travel to access a group. Feedback from members of all the Champs Hubs was that they wanted to meet and hear from other care experienced young people like them. In 2025 during Care Experienced Week we had our first ever Champs School Hub meet up, which brought all three school hubs together for a morning filled with rights-based activities and the opportunity for care experienced young people to meet and socialise together.

Another project we have been working on over the past year is our Scottish Borders Champions Board website. Champs in our school hubs have been involved from the very start. They have led on designing the look and feel of the website and shared ideas about the content they would want to have on it. A letter was drafted and signed by every member of the school hubs and taken to senior managers to express why the website was important to them and how it linked to the Promise and their rights. The website will allow the Champions Board to be reached by more people and offer information important to young people, such as where to access supports, who their corporate parents are, and stories about children and young people who have also had experience of care.

As part of our Champions Connect project, we trialled sending out a subscription-style box to care experienced children and young people from the Borders who now live elsewhere in the UK. The project aimed to ensure these young people continued to have participation opportunities and their voices heard despite not living in the Borders anymore. We hoped these boxes would help keep a link to the Borders for these young people and show them that their corporate parents were still thinking of them. The pilot was completed successfully and gained recognition not only locally but nationally. Work is under way to think about how this project can continue and what we should do next.

Overall, there have been lots of positive developments within the Scottish Borders Champions Board since we last submitted our Children's Rights report. Seeing the young people grow and become more confident has been really rewarding and the Promise team looks forward to seeing how the young people continue to shape the Board and have their voices heard over the next three years!

2 Train More Adults About Children's Rights



Over the last three years, we have worked really hard to make sure the adults who support children and young people in the Scottish Borders understand children's rights and know how to put them into practice every day.

Training School Staff Across the Borders
Staff in primary schools, secondary schools and enhanced provisions took part in UNCRC training. Training was delivered by UNICEF UK, The Scottish Borders Promise Team, Youth Workers and the Young Persons Engagement Lead who have all completed special training so they could teach others. We use national resources and give advice to help share this learning.

Rights Respecting Schools (RRSA) — Making Rights Part of School Life
We also work closely with UNICEF's **Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA)** to help schools learn about children's rights in a fun and practical way.

Because Scottish Borders Council signed a special agreement (called a *Memorandum of Understanding*), individual schools don't have to pay to take part in RRSA.

Since 2023, lots of schools have been learning more about children's rights and working hard to become Rights Respecting Schools.

By February 2026, 37 schools had made progress on their Rights Respecting journey.

- 11 schools signed up for the first time
- 17 schools achieved their Bronze award
- 9 schools achieved their Silver award

This means children's rights are being talked about, learned about and respected more often in classrooms, playgrounds and across whole schools and communities. Children are being listened to, treated fairly and helped to understand their rights every day.

The work of schools has been so strong that one school was even celebrated on ITV News, showing the whole country how important children's rights are in school life.

All of this shows that children's rights are becoming a normal and important part of learning, helping schools become kinder, fairer and more respectful places for everyone.






WE ARE A UNICEF SILVER
RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOL

Training for Elected Members
Members of the Council took part in **Article 12 training** created by the Scottish Youth Parliament and led by young people. This helped decision makers understand why children must be listened to and taken seriously.



Training for Youth Groups, Social Workers, Foster Carers and Community Staff
The theme for Care Experienced Week 2025 was children's rights. We aimed to amplify the voices of young people with care experience, ensuring their rights aren't just words on paper, but are a lived reality.

We focused on empowering both young people and adults to learn about Children's Rights through different events, including:

- Online interactive sessions where foster carers learned about children's rights and how to make sure, they respect them at home.
- Youth workers and social workers took part in UNCRC sessions online so they could better support children and young people in their care.



- We held a Rights in Action Event, where corporate parents, carers, professionals and policy makers from across the region came together and showed their commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of care experienced children and young people. We celebrated achievements and encouraged everyone to share examples of how they are making rights real for children and young people on our Rights Wall.



Members of the Community
Trainers along with MSYP's went out to all the local areas in the Borders to train community councils about children's rights and give them practical ideas on how to engage with children and young people to make sure their voices are heard.

Other staff training
We also delivered UNCRC training at the **Equality and Diversity Conference** attended by council staff, elected members and staff from NHS Borders, helping even more adults understand the importance of children's rights and get practical ideas on how to engage young people and include them in decision making.

Training for Early Years Staff and Childminders

Adults working with younger children — including nursery staff in council and private settings, as well as childminders — completed special UNCRC training created just for them. This helped them understand how even the youngest children can experience and express their rights.

Pupils participation in the Level 5 Early Learning and Childcare course at Hawick High School also received training to develop their understanding of children's rights and explore ways they can recognise and meet these in a nursery setting.



Youth Borders Training
Youth Borders has increased training opportunities for their members by working with us at the Council attending online and in person training on UNCRC and Nicotine Prevention Work.



New Online Learning
We created an **online UNCRC e learning module**, making it easier for adults across the Borders to access children's rights training anytime. This will be launching in Spring 2026 so we continue to ensure that everyone knows and understands children's rights.

The training that adults have taken part in has helped them learn more about children's rights and the UNCRC. Because everyone is learning the same things and using the same words, adults are more confident in how they respect children's rights. This means services are better at working together and are improving how they listen to and involve children and young people.

3 Create Training for Those Working With Children With Complex Needs



What didn't go ahead
We had planned to work with the SEIC (South East Improvement Collaborative) Complex Needs Network to create new UNCRC training for children and young people with complex needs. Unfortunately, we are unsure how this project progressed when Scottish Borders' involvement with the SEIC group ended because Scottish Government funding stopped.

What we did instead:
Even though we were not involved in the further development of any training, Scottish Borders Council has continued to put children's rights at the centre of everything we do. We have been working with schools to support staff understanding of children's rights and to make sure the best interests of every child are considered every day.

This work is part of our wider rights-based approach and helps strengthen staff knowledge through the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) programme. By doing this, we make sure that children and young people with complex needs are supported, listened to, and that their rights are respected in all parts of school life.

There have been courses that focus on:

- help with friendships and solving problems kindly
- listening to children's feelings and different points of view
- creating calm, safe and welcoming classrooms
- making sure everyone can join in, including children who need extra help or speak other languages

This training helps adults make school a place where every child feels safe, included, respected and able to do their best.

Learning for the future:
This shows the importance of building training and resources that can be used locally, so all our schools and staff can continue to develop children's rights knowledge, even when national projects change.

4 Work with Children and Young People to Improve Play Spaces



Play Parks Improvement — What's Happening

The Communities and Partnerships team is helping to make play parks across the Scottish borders better! Over the last year we've been working with children, schools, and local groups to make sure new and improved parks are fun, safe, and just right for everyone.

- In 2024/25, **13 new or improved** play parks opened, and we'll be helping with **6 more** in 2025/26.
- We've talked to **over 1,000 children aged 2 to 13+** across 15 of our communities to hear what they want in their parks.
- We ran **more than 20 fun sessions** in schools and community groups to get children's ideas.
- Using online surveys, we also collected the thoughts and ideas of **1,145 local people** about what they'd like to see in their parks.

Below are some examples of what we have been involved in.

Broughton
46 children from Broughton Primary School and nursery took part in the consultation process. Considering the views of children when designing a new play park is hugely important and we were delighted to hear all those voices. The process enabled the children to have a say on decisions that affect them. They cast their votes on which items of play park equipment they would like in their new park which helped to shape the final design. The children and the community are very happy with their new play facility which opened in June 2025!

Earlston Destination Play Park
In March 2025 the engagement process began for Earlston Destination Play Park. With an outlined investment for the new facility with £312,000 planned to help make this happen, we opened the engagement by providing a number of presentations on the project to the children and young people and the teaching staff. We contacted all the schools in the catchment area for Earlston and held in person engagement sessions with Earlston Primary school and Early Learning Centre, Earlston High School, Lauder Primary School, Leader Valley School, and Westruther Primary School.

434 children in total were involved in the consultation process where we asked their opinion on what equipment they would like to see if their new park. All the children were excited to be involved in the process and to choose which items they would like. The Citizen Space Consultation Survey received 224 responses from local residents and the data will be collated and used to create a design for the park. All the children and communities involved in the consultation will be able to view the design and will be kept informed throughout the installation process. Final completion is estimated for early 2026!





Newcastleton

Engagement took place with a range of groups in Newcastleton including, The Little Explorers at Buccleuch House, Newcastleton Primary School and the Youth Club. An online survey ran alongside the face to face events. Feedback from the community was used to inform the park's new design. The park features a specially designed play train as its centrepiece, the first of its kind in the UK. A variety of equipment to suit different ages and abilities has been included, such as climbing nets and wall, slides, triple bay swings, agility trail, wheelchair carousel, accessible play panels and many other items. Local schoolchildren were asked to take part in a competition to name the train. The winning entry was submitted by Adam Cropper who unveiled 'The Copshaw Express 2024'.





Paxton and St Abbs
Over 50 children from the areas of Paxton and St Abbs in Berwickshire were able to vote on which items of play equipment they wanted in their new parks. Community Engagement Officers supported the engagement and communication with the communities and were able to offer time lines for completion and any relevant updates to the works.





Eyemouth Destination Play Park and Wheeled Sports Facility
To gather lots of views on things like equipment, style, purpose and themes, we asked children and young people in person in schools and local groups to look at pictures of equipment and choose their top 5 pieces.

We also asked them to fill in a questionnaire online either on their own or with their families, groups, or classes. We had over 466 responses and look forward to using these ideas to help design the new play park.



5 Give Young Carers Quicker Support







Action for Children

Action for Children is a support service for children, young people, and parents in the Scottish Borders. We support young carers, children and young people impacted by family drug or alcohol use, parents and carers who are currently using drugs or alcohol or have in the past, and other adults in the family who are impacted by someone else's drug or alcohol use.

A young carer is a young person aged 7–18 years old who cares for someone who has any type of illness, disability and/or cares for someone who uses drugs or alcohol. We listen to the voices of young carers to make sure we plan the right support for them. We do this through:

- giving young people the choice to complete a Young Carers Statement — an assessment tool to detail how much caring responsibility they have and how it affects their lives. This helps the young person to share their feelings, needs and feel listened to. It gives others an understanding of what life is like for them and helps others recognise young person's strengths and skills and where they might need some support. We also offer different types of assessments.
- We create a service plan. This is a plan of support tailored to each young person's unique journey.

We provide support to young carers in different ways:

- Group activities and support sessions, such as school drop-ins in the Berwickshire area, sports days and a regular music group during school holidays. We reduce barriers to engagement by providing transport, refreshments and covering other associated costs.
- 1–1 emotional support from a key worker. We help the young people to make sense of their family situation. We try to help reduce any feelings of shame, blame or guilt that the young person might be feeling, and we look to help them increase confidence, resilience, self-esteem and positive coping strategies.
- We share resources that are child friendly, called Oh Lila and Rory stories. These help young people to understand, at an age-appropriate level, what is happening in their family and how they can keep themselves safe.
- We are trained in using the Nicotine Prevention Toolkit and we can support young people to make safer choices to look after their own wellbeing and ensure young people are well informed around the harms of nicotine.

Ross's Story

Ross aged 14 is a young carer who has been looking after his mum and younger brother for many years. There has been social work involvement due to some concerns around Ross' needs not being met. His mum has mental health challenges as well as issues with alcohol and his younger brother, aged 8 has a diagnosis of Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Ross has to share a room with his brother who is often unsettled and awake through the night, so his sleep is regularly disturbed. Ross never misses a group and the thing he says he likes best is the food; breakfast, snacks and lunch is provided for full day activities. Ross says he feels valued and listened to as staff don't give him a hard time when he doesn't always want to join in the activity mainly because he is tired and all he wants to do is just sit on his own to relax and get a break away from what is a busy house. Staff have realised how important this quiet time is to Ross for him to recharge his energy levels. He often returns home after a group looking and feeling a little more refreshed than when he was collected in the morning. Ross' mum says coming to groups is the only break Ross gets, and she notices the difference when he returns home looking happy and relaxed.

6 Teach British Sign Language (BSL) in More Schools



We've been working hard to help more schools learn and use British Sign Language (BSL).

So far, staff in five primary schools have already taken part in BSL training, and three more schools are ready to start in the next school year (2026/2027). Training has been offered to lots of different school staff, but not everyone has been able to join in yet, so we're looking at better ways to share it and make sure more people can take part.

All schools now have access to a special BSL teaching pack that helps pupils learn BSL at different levels. Some schools are already using it, while others are still getting started. We're keeping an eye on how well the pack is being used and what difference it makes for learners. At the moment, our specialist BSL teaching team is a bit smaller than usual, so they're focusing mainly on supporting the pupils who need them most. As things get back to normal, we hope to offer even more chances for schools to learn and use BSL.

At Stirches Primary School, everyone took part in a six week BSL pilot where teachers and pupils learned signs together each week. They found out what BSL is, how it works, and practised real conversations using signs for feelings, numbers, days of the week and more. Teachers began using BSL every day in class routines and even included it in the Christmas concert. Pupils said they enjoyed learning BSL and liked that it helped everyone communicate. Because the pilot was such a success, we are now planning how children can keep learning BSL from nursery to Primary 7, and we are sharing what worked so other schools can learn BSL too.

7 Include Children in Planning for Better Oral Health

Participation & Empowerment of Children and Young People

What we are doing about children's oral health

NHS Borders Dental Services are working to make sure children and young people have healthy teeth and mouths, and that their rights are respected. A long-term Oral Health Plan has been created to help improve dental care and prevent problems before they start. Children's best interests are at the centre of this work, and services focus on keeping children safe, healthy and supported as they grow.

Children and families were given chances to share their views when the plan was being developed, using posters and QR codes in dental clinics and health centres. Dental teams work hard to make sure every child feels welcome, included and supported. They take time to understand what each child needs, including children who may communicate differently, feel worried about appointments, or need extra support to feel comfortable. Children are encouraged to be involved in decisions about their own dental care, and they are asked for feedback after appointments so services can keep improving.

View the Oral Health Strategic Plan 2024–2036



8 Use the new Care Opinion Bear



NHS Borders has been working hard to bring in a fun and easy way for children to share their thoughts about their care. You might remember Care Opinion Monkey – well, it has now become Care Opinion Bear! Care Opinion Bear is here to help you tell us what you enjoyed during your visit, what wasn't so good, and what could make things better next time. What you say really helps us make care kinder and safer for everyone.

To get everything ready, we shared special Care Opinion Bear cards and posters with lots of different teams who look after children — like dietitians, physiotherapists, nurses and doctors. We added simple QR codes too, so you can use a phone to quickly reach the feedback page. Local children even helped us make some fun activity resources, so it feels friendly and enjoyable. We also made a Care Opinion Bear email logo that staff can use so you'll recognise it easily. Sixteen children and young people's services are already using Care Opinion Bear. We have received 43 stories so far. These stories are about people's experiences with services like health visiting and school nursing. Children, parents, and carers can all share their own story about the care they received.

We visited places like Ward 15 called Noah's Ark to see how children are giving feedback now and how we can make it easier. We chatted with staff about using things like pictures, posters and games to help you feel comfortable when sharing your views. We also made sure everyone understands that this links to your rights – you have the right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. When you are ready to go home after a hospital stay, staff can tell you about Care Opinion Bear again and help you use it if you want to.

We've also created a special webpage for children and young people on the NHS Borders website. It includes information about your rights and quick links to Care Opinion Bear. Soon, we'll be asking children to tell us what they think about our website so we can make it even better.

We will keep working with lots of teams to make sure Care Opinion Bear is available everywhere children get care. Every time you share your thoughts, our teams read them and use your ideas to make real improvements. Care Opinion Bear is here to remind you that your voice matters, and you're helping us make our services better for all children and young people.

You can tell your story by following this link:
Tell your story with help from Bear


NHS
Borders
voice
H O U S E
L E A R N
T E L L
S A F E
FOOD
HEALTH
HOUSE
LEARN
LISTEN
LOVE
PLAY
RIGHTS
SAFE
VOICE
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Article 12
Children have a right to an opinion, be listened to and taken seriously by adults.
Bear needs YOUR help!
Care Opinion


Draw Your House and Colour
Bear needs YOUR help!
Care Opinion
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
NHS
Borders
voice

9 Make Complaints Easier for Children



When the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child became part of Scots law, public services in Scotland had to make sure children and young people could easily speak up if they were unhappy, worried, or felt something was unfair — and know that adults would listen, take them seriously and try to help.

Some public services in Scotland created their Child Friendly Complaints process very quickly. They shared national guidance from an organisation called the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman with staff and asked them to start using it straight away.

At Scottish Borders Council, we wanted to take a bit more time. We wanted to make sure the process worked well for children and young people here, and that it was clear what staff needed to do. We also needed to make sure staff kept good notes about the decisions they made and the actions they took, so nothing was missed.

Because of this, it has taken us a little longer to bring in our child friendly complaints approach. We want to get it right and make sure staff feel confident in using it and in supporting children and young people through the process.

At the end of December 2025, we finished trying out a draft version of the process. Now we're collecting feedback and making any changes we need before we use it across the whole council.

Our aim is simple:

"We want children and young people in the Scottish Borders to feel listened to, taken seriously, and able to have more control over what happens when something goes wrong.

10 Support Free Bus Travel for Under 22s

Children's Rights Budgeting

Empowerment of Children and Young People

What's Been Happening?

Since 2022, the Youth Engagement Worker has been visiting schools, especially P7–S1, to help young people learn about the Young Scot National Entitlement Card (YSNEC) that allows young people aged 5–21 in Scotland to access free bus travel. These talks, events, and workshops have helped lots of young people get their cards, start travelling for free, and feel more confident about using public transport.

How Many Young People Now Have Travel Entitlement?

The number has been growing every year:

- **2023: 10,023 young people**
- **May 2024: 10,419 young people**
- **March 2025: 12,176 young people**

This includes all travel concessions, such as the Under 22s pass and disability travel entitlements.

Young Scot Membership Is Growing Too
More young people are signing up to Young Scot each year:

- **2023: 2,619 mem 16%)**
- **2025: 3,269 members (19%)**

This increase is partly thanks to the school visits and events run by the Youth Engagement Worker to help young people sign up easily.

How Schools and the Council Have Helped
Not everyone has the right ID or documents needed to get their Young Scot NEC.

To make sure no young person misses out:
Schools and Scottish Borders Council worked directly with families. They helped young people find or replace the ID they needed so more people could apply successfully for their free bus pass.

The SBC Transport Team also plays a big part. They keep track of the data from Under 22s bus travel. This helps them understand:

- Which routes young people use the most
- Where buses are still needed
- How public transport can improve

This information helps shape better transport services across the Borders.

The Pingo Transport Pilot
The council used travel data from young people to help test new ideas, like the Pingo demand responsive transport pilot (a bit like a taxi that picks up lots of different people at once).

Two young people from Berwickshire High School even helped create a video explaining how well the Pingo service worked and why it mattered. Their voices helped show the real impact on young people's lives.



What's Next?
In 2025, the Youth Engagement Worker will keep delivering Young Scot sessions in schools and at local events. The goal is to:

- Help even more young people sign up
- Make sure everyone knows how to get their free bus travel
- Support young people to feel confident using public transport
- Keep improving membership and the number of people accessing travel entitlements

Why This Matters
Free bus travel helps young people:

- Save money
- Get to education, work, and activities
- Stay connected with friends and family
- Feel more independent

With schools, the council, and young people working together, the Borders is becoming a place where travel is easier, cheaper, and more accessible for everyone.

11 Create a Health Passport for Hospital Stays

Improving Practice

Empowerment of Children and Young People

Unfortunately, we were unable to provide an update on the Health Passport action in time for the publication of this report.

12 Raise Awareness of Autism and Neurodivergent Needs, Offer Advisory Support

Training and Awareness Raising

Non-Discrimination and Rights at Risk

Meeting of Minds — School Assembly Project

We are a charity called Meeting of Minds and we support families and young people with additional and complex needs in the Scottish Borders. We love visiting primary and secondary schools to share fun and helpful assemblies about autism and ADHD. This project started in February 2024, because we wanted to help children and young people learn more about kindness and how to support all of our friends.

So far, we have been to 15 primary schools and 1 secondary school in the Scottish Borders. We have some more dates in our diary to visit different schools this year, and we will continue to visit schools to talk with children and young people about neurodiversity.

Some people think, learn, or feel differently, and that's what makes the world interesting and amazing. There is no "right" way to be you!

What are our assemblies about?
When we visit schools, we do this voluntarily and free of charge to the local schools. We talk about:

- Being kind, no one deserves to feel left out or made to feel sad or unsafe.
- Understanding how we can support each other.
- Learning how to be the best version of ourselves.
- making sure that everyone knows that everyone is different, everyone is unique, and that's more than okay, it's something to celebrate!
- how important it is to continue to learn so we can all make our communities safe, happy and inclusive to all.



In our assemblies, we have some 'real life stories' from people who have been part of Meeting of Minds. As part of our secondary school assembly, a young person shared their personal experience of high school and a positive story of how their life looks now. We also worked with Autism Outreach, who asked a group of individuals what they would like included in our presentation, this helped us to understand what information would be most beneficial
to teenagers.

Meeting of Minds

Quotes from young people:

"I'm autistic and I wanted my friends to understand why I do some things that may upset them, but I didn't mean to. My brain is different and I'm getting used to that. I was also very proud of my mum for helping others to understand that autism isn't a bad thing."

"Megan was very good, she knew lots of interesting facts to help us understand that we are all different and that's OK, and how we can support each other especially when someone is having a tricky time"

13 Give young people a vote in local planning

Children's Rights Budgeting

We make sure young people have a real say in what happens in their communities. By holding fun and friendly chats – our youth community conversations, group discussions, and activities like participatory budgeting and holding digital and small group discussions called 'Your Priorities, Your Voice,' young people can share their ideas about what would make their area better.

Youth Community Conversations

Young people first told us through a digital questionnaire what was important to them and what changes they wanted to see in their area. We then hosted an event in schools across the Scottish Borders. These sessions gave young people a chance to meet council decision-makers, share their ideas, and have a real say in things that affect their lives, like school, play, and mental health. The conversations were designed so everyone could take part, understand what council services do, and feel their opinions mattered. They included one-to-one or small group chats with people from different services, a graffiti wall to make suggestions and create artwork to demonstrate wants and needs, snack and games tables to encourage engagement and help young people feel relaxed.

Young people had the opportunity to ask questions and suggest solutions. The adults listened and promised to take action where they could. Everyone agreed it helped build better relationships and trust between young people and the council. We also learned ways to make future conversations even better, like giving more time to prepare and making sure follow-up actions are shared. These sessions show that young people's voices are important and can really help shape decisions in the community.





Your Priorities — Your Voice and Helping Shape Our Future — Scottish Borders Council Budget and Plan Consultations

Young people across the Scottish Borders took part in a big consultation to share what matters most to them. You helped by filling in individual surveys, talking in small groups, and taking part in larger discussions in schools and youth groups. The top priorities you identified were Good Health and Wellbeing and Caring for Nature and Climate. Many of you told us that you want better mental health support, quicker access to doctors, cleaner parks, and action to protect wildlife and the planet. You also said that jobs, transport, and education are important because they shape your future and help everyone have fair chances.

Some priorities were different depending on where you live. Young people in smaller towns said buses don't run often enough, it's hard to get to places, and there aren't enough local facilities like swimming pools or good parks. Most of you felt your voices were heard, but you also gave helpful ideas for improving consultations—like making questions simpler, giving space for extra ideas, and making activities more interactive. The council will now share the results with you, use your feedback to help plan services, and keep involving you in decisions in the future. This is all part of making sure young people are listened to and included.

14 Ask Young People About Sport, Leisure and Culture







Culture, Arts and Heritage Engagement

We set out to speak to people across the Borders about Culture, Arts and Heritage and what it meant to them and how everyone could get more out of creative activities. We met with lots of people who have creative jobs and hobbies, and companies who help people to do cultural things, and we spoke to young people in schools and college about how the work we were doing could help them.

We talked about access to play, and chances to be creative and enjoy music and culture, as well as about opportunities for them to grow up and have creative careers. Young people told us about how access to things could be difficult, and that some things are expensive. They also told us that the word "culture" didn't mean much to them, but thinking about local history and festivals, music, film, art and how they spend time with friends and family was really important to them, and how they feel.

We spent time chatting with around 60 young people at different schools and high schools, with teachers and the Community Learning Development team supporting another 105 young people to submit their thoughts through an online survey.

Champions for young people from Creative Arts Business Network (CABN), Borders Youth Voice and Children and Youth Arts Advocacy (CYAA) have been part of the process of drafting a strategy (a plan) They were also part of the team supporting young people to express their feelings on cultural issues in Bloom Media: Arts, Culture, and Us.

Ongoing representation from young people forms part of the recommendations for a Cultural Partnership that will be presented to elected members at a full council meeting in the coming months.







Live Borders Estate Consultation

We asked for your help because Live Borders

looks after more than 70 places in the Scottish Borders where people go to have fun, learn, and get active — like swimming pools, museums, libraries, and sports centres. Some of these buildings are getting quite old, and they cost a lot of money to fix and keep open. The Council only has a certain amount of money to spend, so they have to make some difficult decisions.

That's why we asked you — the young people who use these places — to tell us what you think, so we can make the best choices for everyone.

And you really showed up!

Here's how you helped:

- Over 1,325 young people filled in our online survey.
- 43 pupils from Jedburgh Grammar Campus, Eyemouth High School, and Hawick High School came to special budget planning sessions.
- More than 50 young people came along to youth sessions at places like Jedburgh Town Hall, Inspire Learning in Tweedbank, the No. 8 Club in Newcastleton, the Burgh Hall in Peebles, TD1 Youth Hub, Tweeddale Youth Action, and the Escape Youth Café.
- Some young people also took part in other activities we ran for everyone in the community.

Here's what you told us:

- Sports and leisure buildings are really important to young people in the Borders.
- Some things make it hard to use these places — like prices, travel, or tricky booking systems.
- You would love more clubs (sports, arts, and social) and better facilities.
- Libraries and youth clubs matter a lot, and many of you are worried about them closing.
- You want more activities that are fair, flexible, and affordable for everyone.

Using your ideas — along with feedback from adults — we created a set of proposals to help keep buildings open and give communities the chance to run them if they want to. You can find more information about the agreed proposals here: Agenda item - Live Borders - Joint Transformational Change Programme Proposals - Scottish Borders Council.

A huge thank you to every young person who took part — your voices made a real difference!

"WE DIDN'T STOP THERE! HERE ARE SOME OF OUR BIG ACHIEVEMENTS"

We want to share with you more of the amazing work we have done, that we are really proud of from the last 3 years. We have really focussed on five articles we felt were areas we could make a real difference and where you had indicated you wanted change to make these rights real.

We think we have made a real difference and had some really big achievements with these five articles 12, 15, 33, 39 and 42.



OUR BIG ACHIEVEMENTS →

12



RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS

ARTICLE 12
Respect for Children's Views

We wanted to listen more to children and young people because Your Voice Matters — You have the right to have your say in all matters that affect you and for adults to take what you say seriously. But it's not enough for us just to listen—we want to work with you, not just hear you. That means helping you share your ideas, make choices, and help shape the things that happen in your school, community, or services. To do this we knew we had to set up new ways for you to get involved and a big part of that was to co-create with you an approach for adults to get better at working with young people and getting them involved. To do this we had 3 goals

1. Give young people seats at important meetings
2. Co-design a participation and engagement strategy
3. Support Local Action groups where young people help make decisions and plan for the future. Together, we're making sure their voices help shape the places they live.

Giving Young People Seats at Important Meetings

- **Education Executive Representatives:** Education Executive Representatives are a group of young people from S5. Their job is to speak up for all students and share young people's ideas with the adults who make decisions about schools and education. They choose to apply for the role and one or two pupils from every high school are picked to join the group.

  Include young people where decisions are made
  Give children and young people opportunities to take part in meetings and groups where decisions are made about education, community projects, safety and local services, so that their views help shape policies and plans that affect them.

- **Lord Lieutenant's Meetings:** Young people have had the opportunity to contribute to discussions with local civic leaders, sharing their ideas and experiences and projects they have been involved in. This included presenting on the work of the Champions Board, YELL Strategy and Nicotine Prevention work at The Lord Lieutenant's Meeting.

  Who are Lord Lieutenants?
  A Lord Lieutenant is an important person in your area who represents the King and supports local communities. They visit schools, charities, and groups to see the amazing work people are doing.



Meeting them is a great chance for young people to:

- **Share your ideas and projects** — like youth participation, care-experienced projects, or campaigns about staying safe from nicotine.
- **Be recognised** — it's a way for adults to see how much effort you've put in and how your work is making a difference.
- **Have your voice heard** – you can show that young people's opinions matter and can influence decisions in your community.
- **Gain confidence** — talking about your work to important people helps you feel proud and confident in what you've achieved.
- **Open doors** — Lord Lieutenants know other leaders and organisations, so this can lead to more opportunities for your projects
- **Public Protection Committee:** Children and young people have presented their perspectives on safety and wellbeing, helping decision-makers understand their priorities and concerns.
- **Being involved in interviews to make sure we appoint the right person for you:** Since January 2025, young people have been helping to choose new head teachers and deputy head teachers by being part of special interview panels. You work with a member of staff to come up with the questions you want to ask and decide how to give feedback. The staff member sits with you during the interviews to support you, but they don't take part in choosing who gets the job. After the interviews, you share your thoughts with the main panel, who listen carefully to what you say, even though you don't get a vote. Your feedback is always honest, clear and really helpful, and adults appreciate how seriously and professionally you take the role.



- **Learning about local democracy**
  Our S6 head teams from all 9 high schools were invited to visit the Council HQ chambers to take part in mock debates and have lunch with elected members. These activities gave young people a valuable insight into how decisions are made and helped build relationships between young people and council members. Our young people said it was a great opportunity to see council services in action and to have their voices heard, helping to improve engagement and understanding of local government.





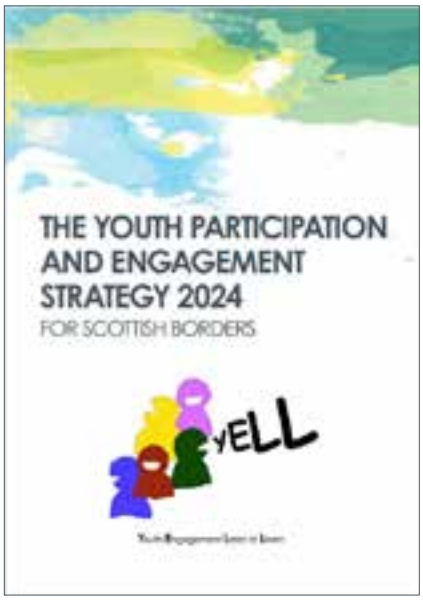
- **Independent advocacy**
  Autumn 2025, we had to decide who would be the best organisation to deliver an independent advocacy service for children and young people in the Borders.

  What is independent advocacy?
  Sometimes when adults who work for schools, the health service or social services make important decisions about your life, they forget to ask you what you think and feel. Sometimes they need to make decisions that you don't like or agree with. This is why we need an independent advocacy service. An independent advocate is a special person whose only job is to listen to you, stand by your side, and make sure your voice is heard. They are completely independent and they can help you to speak up if you find it hard to say what you want. They will also help you understand your rights and what you are allowed to have and do.

  Choosing the service
  Interested organisations had to send us a tender, which is a bit like a job application that detailed how they would run the service and what was important to them about working with children and young people. They then had to deliver a presentation to a panel of six people about their plans for the new service. Our panel included two young people who helped make the decision about which organisation should run the new service. This new service will be in place for the next three years at least, from Spring 2026.

By creating these opportunities, we move beyond simply listening — we **actively work with young people**, ensuring their views are part of real decision-making processes that affect their lives. This approach demonstrates our commitment to **empowering young people, respecting their rights, and shaping a better Scottish Borders for all children**.

Co-designing a Participation and Engagement Strategy



The YELL project (Youth Engagement Listen to Learn) was created in the Scottish Borders to make sure children and young people are properly listened to when decisions are being made about their lives. It's all about your rights — especially your right to be heard, based on Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)

To make this happen, adults from different services teamed up with young people aged 11–23 from across the Borders. They included young people with different backgrounds, needs, and experiences — such as care experienced young people, LGBTQ+ young people, young people with additional support needs, and those who learn at home. Because the Borders is so spread out, two groups were created: one in the East and one in the West.

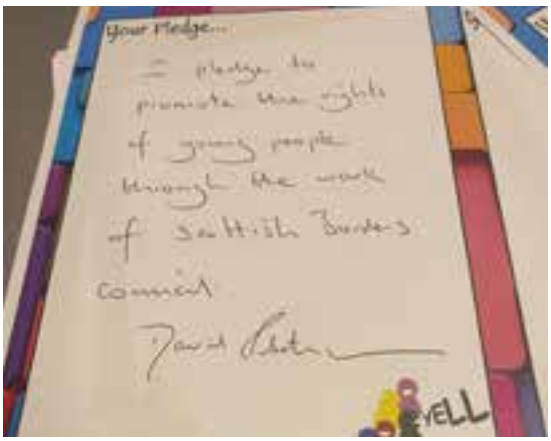


Together, the groups learned about children's rights, The Promise, and what real participation should look like. They spent months building confidence, doing team tasks, and designing ways to make sure **all** young voices are heard — including quieter voices or those who don't always get asked.

The young people then created a huge digital consultation, which more than **1,000 young people** across the Borders took part in—the biggest ever in the area! They helped design event ideas, checklists, videos, and even the YELL logo to spread the message that young people deserve to be involved in decisions that affect them.

The information gathered was used to create the YELL Strategy. The strategy explains how adults and services should include young people's voices in a meaningful way — from the start of any project, not as an afterthought.

It was launched at a big event with young people, school pupils, councillors, and partners from across the Borders.





Chief Executive of SBC
David Robertson at the YELL launch



Leader of the Council Cllr Euan Jardine
writing a pledge at the YELL launch.


yELL
Youth
Engagement
Listen
To
Learn

The YELL team's ambition is simple but powerful: to make sure youth voice is not just a "nice idea" but something that actually happens everywhere, all the time. Young people want to feel comfortable taking part, to be given the right information, and to help shape the future they will inherit. As Darcy from YELL said,

"This strategy is directed to the people in power... This is your chance to get this right."

Impact of YELL

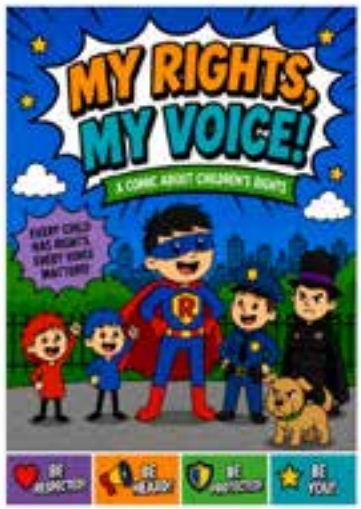
Because of the YELL strategy, children and young people now have real chances to share their views and be listened to. Adults inform children about what is happening, consult them to hear their ideas, discuss choices together, partner with them to make improvements, and empower them to help shape services.

Before YELL, no young people under 18 took part in the Council's budget consultation. Over the last two years, between 500 and 1,000 children and young people have shared their views. Adults are now working with schools to link this to learning about democracy and to create even more chances for children to decide how money is spent.

Participation is becoming fairer and more inclusive, with extra support helping younger children and those whose voices are not always heard to take part and have a say.

We have many services follow our simple approach of:

INFORM → **CONSULT →** **DISCUSS →** **PARTNER →** **EMPOWER**



Next Steps for YELL

Now, the team are working with younger children to create child friendly versions of the strategy, including a comic, song and video. After that they will work on developing a framework to support adults to engage children aged 0–12 — so that every child or young person, whatever their age, can have a say.

Local Action Groups

Jedburgh Action Group (JAG)

Jedburgh Action Group (JAG) is a youth led action group made up of 4–6 young people who have met weekly after school since September 2025. The group was established to take forward priorities identified in the **Jedburgh Children and Young People's Plan**, ensuring that local young people have a meaningful role in shaping decisions that affect their lives and community.



Why This Work Was Developed

The group was created in response to young people's expressed desire to be **heard, taken seriously, and involved in local decision-making making**. The Jedburgh Children and Young People's Plan highlighted key issues that mattered most to young people, and JAG was developed as a practical way of turning those priorities into action.

This approach also reflects Scotland's commitment to children's rights, ensuring young people are not only consulted, but actively supported to influence change in their community.

"Young people have a right to be heard and to have a say about things that affect them in their lives."

How the Group Runs and What It Involves



JAG meets weekly after school and is facilitated in a way that promotes youth leadership, shared decision-making, and collective responsibility. Young people selected three priority areas from the Children and Young People's Plan:

- **Affordable food**
- **Accessible shopping**
- **Transport**

Over the term, the group has planned and delivered real-world actions linked to these priorities. Members have taken on roles such as research, event planning, presenting, and peer consultation, developing skills in teamwork, organisation, and communication.



What Has Been Achieved
Since September, the group has demonstrated strong leadership and initiative:

- **Youth Voice and Representation**
  JAG members delivered two presentations:
  - At **Scottish Borders Council Headquarters to practitioners**.
  - In school to **council officers and councillors**.

These experiences ensured decision makers heard directly from young people.

[illegible] and getting to work with others."

- **Youth Led Action: School Swap Event**
  The group identified the need for affordable clothing and developed a **school toy swap event**, which they successfully planned and delivered and gave young people a tangible sense of achievement.

"Swap event was great, as helped parents out at Christmas."

"This is different to other groups, as we are helping peo



Impact on Young People
By being involved in JAG, young people have:

- Grown in **confidence, motivation, and self-belief belief**
- Developed **leadership, planning, and communication skills**
- Learned how to work together and turn ideas into action
- Begun to see themselves as **active contributors to their community**

"Helps me understand what I can do — I can help people in many different ways."

"This is the best group I've been to."

"I like being involved in this group, as I like helping Jedburgh and I want to make the town better so more people can visit."

Between September and December, the group has contributed **48 volunteering hours,** which will be recorded towards **Saltire Awards**, recognising their commitment and hard work.

Looking Ahead
In the New Year, JAG plans to:

- Host **'Conversations with SBC's Transport Team'**, ensuring young people's experiences and ideas inform local transport planning.
- Research **community fridge initiatives** across the Scottish Borders and explore whether one can be developed in Jedburgh.

Children's Rights in Action

JAG is strongly rooted in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**:

- **Article 12 — Right to be Heard**
  Young people are supported to express their views and have these taken seriously in decisions affecting their community.
- **Article 13 — Freedom of Expression**
  The group provides opportunities for young people to communicate their ideas through presentations, discussion, and events.
- **Article 15 — Freedom of Association**
  JAG creates a safe and supported space for young people to come together, organise, and take collective action.
- **Article 31 — Right to Participate**
  Through volunteering and community action, young people actively participate in social and civic life.

JAG demonstrates how embedding children's rights in practice leads to meaningful participation, greater confidence, and real community impact.

Youth Borders

Youth Borders is an organisation in the community that we work very closely with, as one of our partners they have also supported young people to have seats at important meetings, here's how...

Youth Local Action Group — What They Did This Year

Our Youth Local Action Group has been speaking up for what young people in the Borders need. In December 2025, they helped give out **£50,000** from the Young Entrepreneurs Fund to support young people who wanted to start or grow their own businesses.

They also shared their ideas and achievements with someone from the Scottish Government in November. Their thoughts and voices help shape the decisions made by the Local Action Group.

The LEAD Team and Amplify — What's Happening

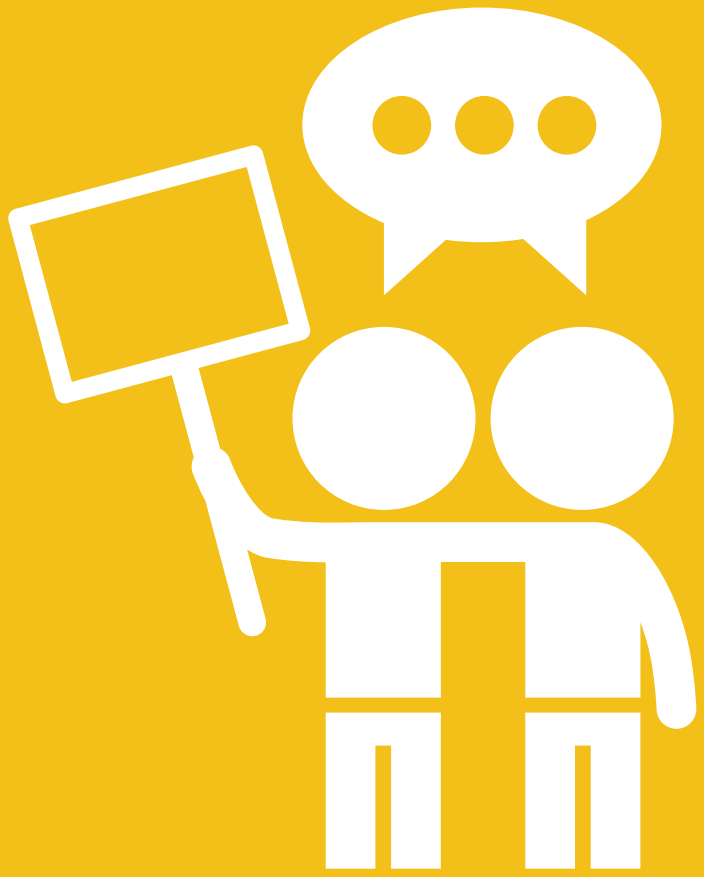
In September 2025, YouthBorders started a new group called **LEAD**. The team is made up of young people aged 11–16. They help plan our youth awards, speak up for young people across the Borders, and represent over 6,000 young people in our network.

The LEAD Team is learning how to be leaders. They look into local issues, listen to what young people think, and share this with the YouthBorders Board so adults making decisions can hear young voices.

YouthBorders is also part of **Youth Scotland's Amplify programme**, which helps make sure young people — especially those who don't always get heard—can share their ideas and take part in decisions that affect them.

Amplify focuses on giving young people the confidence, skills and support they need to lead and make positive change.

15



SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS

ARTICLE 15

Setting up or joining groups

Article 15 of the UNCRC says that children and young people have the right to meet together and join groups. This includes things like clubs, sports, youth groups, and any spaces where young people can spend time together safely and enjoy being part of a group.

In the Scottish Borders, we want children and young people to have plenty of opportunities to spend time with friends and make new ones, try out different things, learn new skills and have fun! Over the last 3 years, lots of services have run different programmes of activities to make sure all children and young people have opportunities to come together and take part in activities that they enjoy.

Having fun, joining in and being part of a team with Scottish Borders Active Schools and Sports Development Team (Article 15)

Article 15 of the UNCRC says that children and young people have the right to **meet up with friends, join clubs, and take part in groups**. Across the Scottish Borders, Active Schools and Sports Development help make this happen every day.

Last year, nearly **7,000 children and young people** took part in sports and activities in schools and communities — things like football, hockey, dance, cycling and lots more. Altogether, this added up to more than **158,000 visits** to activities!



School sport is a deep-rooted tradition within the Scottish Borders across primary and secondary school curricular and extra curricular participation. From weekly fixtures in the traditional team sports of hockey and rugby, to specific blocks of activity leading up to cluster and area competitions and events, school sport accounts for over 7300 visits from pupils.



74 events/festivals were held across clusters in 2024-25. From Sep-Dec, much focus is on hockey, rugby and netball events at primary school with hockey, rugby, and football fixtures at secondary school. January to March brings basketball, sportshall athletics and other sporting opportunities, all of which are well supported by schools. The summer term tends to see greater diversity in the offer across clusters, with track and field athletics being a constant through the summer term.

We also plan activities at times young people told us work best — **before school, at lunchtime and after school**. This means **82%** of all sessions happen at times that make it easier for pupils to join in, even if transport is tricky.

Almost **half of all pupils** in the Borders (about **6,940 young people**) took part in extra curricular activities. That's **10% higher than the national average**, which shows how much young people across the Borders want to be active and part of groups.

We are also really proud that boys and girls take part in almost **equal numbers** — a **50/50 split**. This is unusual nationally, where boys take part more often. Our work supporting girls and young women, especially in sports like hockey and netball, is helping change this.

FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL



One of the mainstays of the children's football pathway in the Scottish Borders, the Festival of Football returned in June, providing an incredible day of fun-filled football for over 1500 children. Now in its 10th year, the event continues to showcase the strength of partnership between SBC's Football Development Officer and the Scottish Borders Junior Football Association who govern the game locally. The festival allows all those participating to fulfil their potential in a relaxed environment. Of particular note, is the continued growth of the girl's game and there were a huge number of girls teams playing on the day. The festival is one focal point that showcases the game but the reality is that a monumental number of volunteers support teams on a weekly basis throughout the year to ensure a true pathway for football.

GIRLS ONLY CLUSTER NETBALL



Through a partnership with Borders College, Earlston Active Schools agreed to place a student with an interest in netball in the cluster to run a targeted girls-only extra-curricular netball club for P4-7 age. With 67 girls signing up to take part in the 6 week block, the student was supported by two Earlston High School senior pupils.

For 30 of the girls, this was the only activity that they participated in out of school time through the year and was therefore an essential activity to support their health and wellbeing. With a strong netball club in Earlston High School, this opportunity provided the perfect platform for those P7 girls who were moving up to the High School after the summer.

"she has really enjoyed having this opportunity. She will be sad to see the sessions end. Great to get that exposure to the feeder secondary and also all the other kids that will be attending 'the big school' with her in a year and a bit" - **Parent**

And the best part?
Active Schools is completely free, so cost is never a barrier to joining in.

In 2024–25 we delivered **885 blocks of activity**, with help from **630 volunteers**. Many of these volunteers are secondary pupils, and we have one of the **highest numbers of young people leading activities** in Scotland.

The Clubsport Network is a volunteer-led body (funded by SBC) representing the interests of sports clubs in the Borders. They grant fund athletes and clubs to support development and growth.

There are **165 sports clubs** in the Clubsport Network, giving children and young people lots of chances to keep being active in their communities, not just in school.

We use data to plan what young people need. For example, we know fewer secondary pupils take part during the summer term, so we are creating new, fun activities to encourage them to join in. We also know participation is lower in the most deprived areas of the Borders, so we are working with schools in these areas to offer extra activities on school sites so joining in feels easy and fun.

MADDIE ROSHER (WEIGHTLIFTING)



Clubsport Berwickshire awarded Maddie their Junior Sports Personality of the Year award in 2024. The Berwickshire High School pupil was awarded a grant to support her training and competition costs relating to weightlifting. Training five times per week in Berwick is a considerable commitment but the costs quickly build up with fortnightly training sessions at Napier University and national and world level competitions. Maddie retained her Scottish senior title in 2024 and represented the Scotland team in Malta and also represented GB Junior team in Peru, finishing 14th in the world.

Creating chances for everyone to join and lead

Active Schools and Sports Development don't just help young people take part — they help them **lead** too.

- Over **180 secondary pupils** helped run sports sessions for others.
- **257 primary pupils** were trained as playground leaders.
- **90 school-connected clubs** and **165 community clubs** help young people stay involved in sport outside school.

Our Community Sport Hub model is taking a new approach to clubs not just being viewed as competitive sports clubs. Through a **'Changing Lives'** Approach, groups are working with health and other community partners to make clubs a more welcoming environment for participation at a much more recreational level through to performance levels, ensuring true lifelong participation.

We make sure that girls, young people with disabilities, and pupils who might struggle because of money or transport still get chances to take part.

ACTIVE SCHOOLS LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

A key objective of the Active Schools network is to build workforce capacity to ensure that participation opportunities can be delivered by a sustainable volunteer network. A key focus group for Leadership development has been the school pupil group and a Leadership pathway now provides a route from playground leadership in Primary School through to Sports Leadership and Ambassador roles in S4-6 at secondary school.



INCLUSIVE SPORTSHALL ATHLETICS



Inclusive Sportshall Athletics festivals provide an excellent opportunity to introduce the fundamentals of athletics to young people with disabilities. Three area events took place this year in Eildon, Tweeddale and Berwickshire, bringing primary and secondary aged pupils together in a central location.
The festivals comprise of run, jump and throw elements, with all pupils being given the opportunity to participate in all aspects which allows for specific tailoring and adaptation of each athletic discipline according to functional ability of each individual.

In preparation for each event, the Disability Development Officer partnered with Borders College and Active Schools colleagues to upskill new sports coaches. Through the delivery of a Disability Inclusion Course, young coaches are equipped with knowledge and skills to create more inclusive coaching environments.

Over 50 young people from 15 schools took part in the festivals and two young people have now joined the local athletics club who offer a dedicated weekly session for individuals with disabilities.



"To see the kids all together like this having fun and integrating with other schools and doing some exercise — it's just great to see" — **Teacher**

Targeted support for summer holiday activities

Sometimes it's harder for families to access activities during school holidays, especially when clubs cost money. This is also a time when children who normally receive targeted support in school might not get the same help.

To fix this, SBC and Live Borders work together every summer to offer **holiday camps** that have a mix of paid places and **free places** for families who need extra support.

Schools, Social Work teams, CLD, NHS teams and charities like Children First help us identify which young people would benefit most.

In **Summer 2024–25 programme:**

- Over **1,900 places** were taken up across **18 activity camps** (two in each school cluster).
- **57% of all places were free of charge** for families needing support.
- The highest uptake of free places came from areas with the **greatest levels of deprivation**, showing the support reached the right young people.

These camps give children and young people the chance to **join groups, be active, make friends, have fun and create great memories** — even during the school holidays.

Early Years Centre Summer Programme

There are four Early Years Centres in the Scottish Borders — Eyemouth, Burnfoot, Langlee and Philiphaugh. In 2025, each Early Years Centre ran a summer programme.

Eyemouth Early Years Centre Summer Programme

In 2025, 43 families came along to the Eyemouth Early Years Centre 4-week Summer Programme, which involved different activities for families with children aged 0-5 and brothers and sisters up to 8 years old.

We sent a survey to families who visit the centre to ask them what types of activities they would like. The summer programme was planned based on what they told us they'd like, including a beach trip, messy play, arts and crafts, nature trail and visit to the park. The programme allowed families to take part in activities for free, and families told us that it gives them a purpose to get the family ready and to go out.

Lots of families came along — around 75% of families who booked. This meant we could check in with families and offer help if they needed it. It also gave families time to chat and mix with others, which supported their wellbeing. One lone parent said she sometimes felt isolated during the holidays, and coming to the sessions helped her meet other people, which she enjoyed.

During the programme, we give families a healthy fruit snack and a light lunch, funded by Meals and More (a charity who focus on providing nutritious meals during school holidays). Families told us they are grateful for this and that it helps with food costs during the summer holidays.

The summer programme helps families to keep helpful routines, spend time together and build positive relationships. It also gives families opportunities for support when they need it, enjoy healthy food, get new ideas for activities at home and make memories!

Families told us:

"There was plenty of things for little ones to do and created a relaxed and welcoming space for parents to chat! "

"Sessions were great, nice to be outdoors but letting the kids play and socialise. "

"It's always a pleasure to join these groups and you are made to feel supported positive and included. "



TD1



At TD1 Youth Hub, young people can join groups that match who they are, what they care about and what support they want. We run a mix of open groups and smaller targeted groups, so you can come as you are, feel part of something and build friendships and confidence over time.

One example is our Tuesday Group. This is a small group for young people who might find bigger spaces difficult, including some care-experienced young people and young people who are neurodivergent. We developed this because some young people told us they wanted a calmer space where they could feel safe, be understood and build connections at their own pace. Young people helped shape how it runs, including what activities happen, how the space feels and what makes it welcoming. The impact is that young people who were feeling isolated have a group where they belong, can make friends, and can take part without pressure. We also see young people grow in confidence, communication, and trust, which helps them in school, at home, and in the community.

Another example is our Early Steps group for young parents. Early Steps exists because young parents often tell us they feel judged, alone, or left out, especially if they are still in school or juggling a lot at home. Early Steps is a supportive group where young parents can meet others, share experiences, learn skills, and feel respected. Parents help shape what topics and activities the group focuses on, and we build the

programme around what they say they need. The impact is increased confidence, stronger support networks, better wellbeing, and more help to stay connected to education, training, or next steps.

We also create chances for young people to come together around positive community projects. For example, youth-led projects like the Langlee underpass mural brought young people together as a team to plan, design, and deliver something visible that they can feel proud of. This kind of work matters because it shows young people they can join together, be heard, and make a difference in their community. It builds teamwork, pride, and a stronger sense of belonging in the Borders.





Football Tournament

A summer football tournament was held for unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UAS) young people in 2024 and 2025. This event was planned and run by the Transitions Team (Social Work), with help from the Promise Team and the Community Learning and Development Service.

The Transitions Team were inspired to start the tournament in 2024, when the young people were playing football at a New Roots session.

"There were Arabic speakers from different countries and Vietnamese speakers on the same team, all speaking their own language and although they didn't understand the words, they understood through football. The young people were having fun, laughing and smiling together and it was fabulous to witness."- Transitions Worker

Our football team had training sessions over the summer from volunteer coaches from Gala Fairydean Rovers. We were very thankful to have help from ASDA, CGI and Selkirk Baptist Church, who gave us donations to help run the event.









In 2025, over 100 UAS young people came from across Scotland to play in the tournament!

Where did they come from?

1	Highland
2	Fife
3	Renfrewshire
4	East Renfrewshire
5	North Lanarkshire
6	West Lothian
7	Edinburgh
8	Midlothian
9	East Midlothian
10	Dumfries & Galloway
11	Scottish Borders

Impact

We asked young people to tell us what they thought of the event, and they rated it an average of 4.6/5. All of the young people who answered said they would like to come back again! They said their favourite parts were sports, meeting new people and spending time with friends.

'I enjoyed the football but the best thing about the day was all the people that came to support our team'

Young person's feedback

'There was a lovely moment when one of the boys from the Scottish Borders team scored, and he looked up at the stand to see everyone clapping him.'

Spectator

'What a day we had, this was our first time at the tournament so we were the newbies. It was good to see our young people engaging in something they love to do and mixing with others from different areas'

Staff from Renfrewshire

This event gave the young people the chance to meet up with young people from across Scotland who may have had similar experiences. Some of the young people even reconnected with friends who they met on their journeys to the UK! The young people and workers from the Highlands travelled a long way to reach the Borders, so they stayed overnight. We hosted a relaxed Welcome Night with food and games the night before the football. This meant that some young people got the chance to meet before the tournament and recognise familiar faces on the day.

Feedback from young people shows that this time to meet new people and spend time with friends was important to them.

Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG)

Article 15 says:

I have the right to meet with my friends and join groups.

BANG helps make this right real for children and young people with additional support needs in the Scottish Borders.

BANG is a safe and welcoming group where children and young people can meet others like them, make friends, and feel they belong. At BANG, young people can talk, share ideas, have fun, and support each other.

BANG runs youth & transitions groups and activities where young people help choose what happens. This means they are not just joining in — they are being listened to and helping make decisions. This shows their right to be heard and included.

Branching In

A neuro-affirming youth space for young people aged 11-15 where young people co-create sessions that reflect what matters most to them - whether that's creative projects, social experience or exploring new life skills.

Branching Out

A weekly social group focused on belonging, connection, and identity, offering a consistent and welcoming space where young people aged 16-25 can be themselves, build relationships, and feel part of a peer community.

Branching Forwards

A No One Left Behind skills-focused transitions and employability programme co-designed with young adults aged 16–30. Delivery is flexible and responsive, shaped by young interests, strengths, and readiness to plan and prepare for their next steps.

Divergent Perspectives

A newsletter produced and edited entirely by neurodivergent young people at Borders Additional Needs Group (BANG). This newsletter is a powerful platform for our youth to express themselves, share their views, and connect with the wider community. The group has opportunities for other neurodivergent young people to get involved.

In 2025, BANG helped more people learn about children's rights through a fun videogame experience and their summer camp. These activities showed how working together in groups helps children learn about their rights.

The videogame experience was made especially for neurodivergent young people. It helped children learn about their rights in a fun, interactive, and easy-to-understand way.

The Summer Camp ran for five weeks and was open to families with children and young people with additional support needs. Each week focused on a different children's right, helping families learn together.

[Borders Additional Needs Group: UNCRC Summer Camp 2025 | Improvement Service]

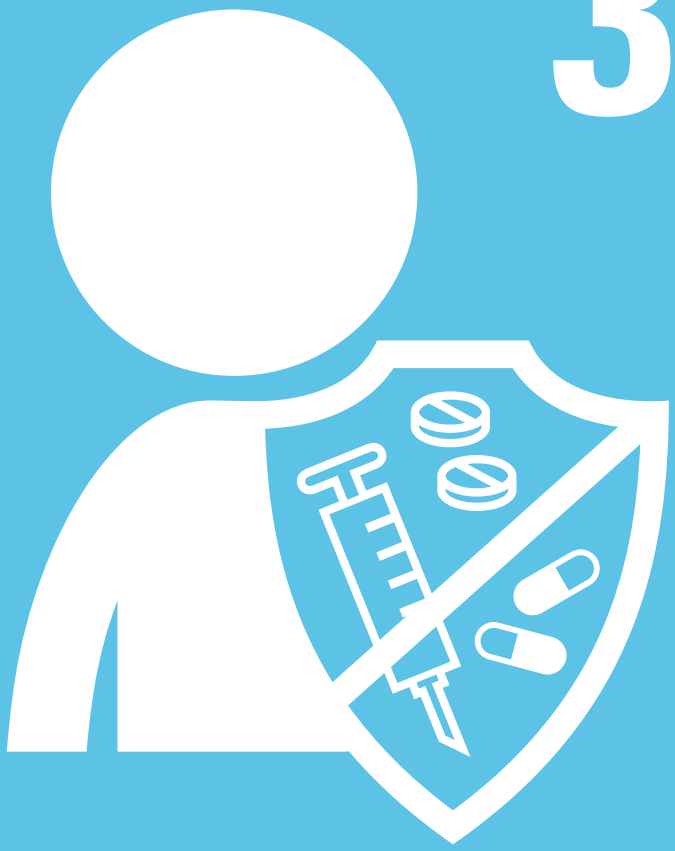








33



PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS

ARTICLE 33

Protection from Harmful Substances

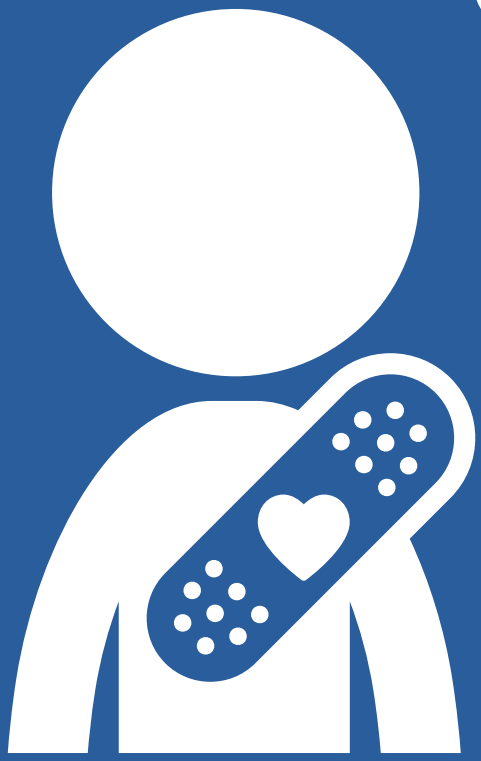
We are proud to say that we have been working hard to respect your right under **Article 33 of the UNCRC**, which says you have the right to be protected from harmful substances, including drugs and nicotine. You shared concerns about vaping, pressure to try nicotine products, and not always feeling safe or comfortable in school toilets, changing rooms at school and sports clubs and in parks, due to young people vaping. As a direct response, we created a **Nicotine Prevention Toolkit** to help you know your rights, understand the facts, and get clear, reliable information about what nicotine is, the harms it can cause, what is really inside nicotine products and how to work together as a community to protect you from underage illegal sales and create nicotine free environments.



Together, you helped shape new ways to talk honestly about vaping, make school spaces safer, and support children and young people to make healthy choices.

The nicotine prevention work you helped design has been recognised nationally. **Education Scotland and the Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, Jenni Minto MSP, described this work and our approach as sector-leading** (This means they were really impressed with it!). Because of this, the work is now being shared with other education and health boards across Scotland and has also had an impact on new laws. You can read the case study in **Appendix D** to find out more about what you said, what changed, and the difference your voices have made.

39



RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION

ARTICLE 39
Recovery and Reintegration

Article 39 of the UNCRC says that children and young people have the right to recover from difficult things that happen to them, and to get the help and support they need to be able to do this. For example, some young people have experienced moving to Scotland without their family or leaving their home because of conflict. Some young people are care experienced, and some are young carers who have responsibilities to look after a member of their family.

Services in the Borders work together to make sure young people get the help they need and are given opportunities to help them feel safe and supported.

Article 39 also says that children's views should be taken into account when deciding on the kind of help they are given. Below you will find some examples of work that is happening in the Borders to help young people recover from difficult experiences, listening to what they need and making sure the help they receive is based on this.

Bright Spots

The Bright Spots Programme is a project which was set up to understand what is important to children in care and care leavers, and how we can make their lives better. The Programme measures care experienced children and young people's wellbeing and helps their corporate parents listen to them and find out more about the things that are important to them. The Bright Spots programme helps to make sure that the views and experiences of children are at the heart of decisions that are made about their lives.

Scottish Borders wanted to be part of this Programme and so filled in an application form and was chosen to be part of the project. To get children and young people's views we sent out Bright Spots Surveys to them and their trusted adults. There were different surveys for different age groups.



There was a lot of feedback through the surveys that we needed to read carefully and understand, and we worked with an organisation called CELCIS who helped us make sense of all the things that young people had told us. Children and young people talked about some of the things that are really good growing up in the Borders, and there were lots of suggestions of things that could be better for care experienced children and young people. We have been sharing what young people have told us with the team of adults whose job it is to care for them and have been asking them to think about what they can do differently based on what we have been told.

In Spring 2025 we spoke to our Champions Board about the survey findings, and they helped us think about which areas we should focus on to change first. They also helped us think about other things that we could do better for care experienced children and young people.

Since August 2025 we have been working with some primary and secondary schools to help them think about what they can do differently for their care experienced pupils. These schools have started making plans for change.

The Champs Board has spoken to the people who are responsible for creating the Corporate Parenting Strategy. This is a list of Promises that local organisations make to Care Experienced children and young people about what they should be able to expect from services that support them. The Champs Board said how important it was for the Promises to consider the Bright Spots findings and they helped write the Promises in a child-friendly way.

There is a lot of work happening to make sure that what children and young people told us through the Bright Spots surveys leads to change.

Action for Children — Young Carers

A young carer is a young person aged 7–18 who looks after someone in their family who has an illness, disability, or who uses drugs or alcohol. Because of their caring role, young carers often spend a lot of time helping others, doing extra responsibilities at home, or coping with difficult situations.

Action for Children provides group activities and residential trips where these young people can come together, take a break and enjoy time out for fun.

In June 2025, Action for Children took 13 young people on a 5-day sailing residential from Largs to Rothesay run by the Cirdan Sailing Trust.

Action for Children asked young people and their parents/carers if they'd be interested in this trip by sending a letter and an email to 40 young people aged 12+. Interest in this trip was the highest Action for Children had seen, with 29 young people applying and only 13 spaces.

13 young people went on the trip, and they all gained their level 1 certificate in sailing. On the trip, we saw the growth and development of a young carer aged 17. She went on the sailing trip as a young person herself, but left as a young adult, having been asked to be a team leader alongside two other staff members. This young person was able to lead and guide a team of 4 young people with close supervision from the staff and crew members. This young adult was asked to consider applying to become a Young Ambassador for Action for Children. She applied, was successful, and is now on the Young Ambassadors Board for Action for Children UK wide.

The young people went home saying they had a fantastic time. They said they enjoyed being part of a team, they all rated the 5 days away as great and asked to go again next year.

The young people said:

"This is the most fun I've ever had. I didn't think I'd be able to do it, but I'm so glad I came."

"A life changing opportunity that created lasting memories, relationships and gave me courage and inspiration"

"I didn't know anyone, but now I've got new friends. I actually miss the anchor watch!"


Faramir





New Roots



The New Roots group is a Scottish Borders Champions Board group, created in 2023 by the Promise Team, with support from the Community Learning and Development Service. The New Roots group is for unaccompanied asylum-seeking (UAS) children and young people in the Scottish Borders. The group gives them opportunities to have their voices heard, whilst helping them to settle into life in the Scottish Borders. The group meet every two weeks and spend time cooking together, playing games, working on projects and taking part in different activities.

The group aims to:

- Support UAS young people to have their voices heard
- Help young people to connect with each other and with workers who can support them
- Offer peer support and welcome new arrivals
- Provide a range of opportunities
- Provide opportunities to learn about and celebrate different cultures

Young people seeking asylum may have had difficult experiences before coming to Scotland or while travelling here. The team help the young people to feel safe, listened to and supported. We work together as a group to make decisions. For example, the young people let us know what activities they'd like, they choose if and what they'd like to cook and they give us feedback on activities to help us plan based on what they want.

There are lots of different languages spoken at New Roots, including Arabic, Pashto, Sorani Kurdish, Somali and Vietnamese. We use visuals, translations and interpreters to make sure each young person can participate in all activities and share their views.

At New Roots, the young people enjoy learning about different cultures and where each person is from.

Mat from Where's the One came to the group to lead music sessions, where the young people played drums and explored maths concepts through drumming. Some of the young people had experience of drumming from their home countries and enjoyed sharing this with the rest of the group!

A young person from Vietnam made Moon Cakes for the group and taught us about the Mid-Autumn Festival.

We also share Scottish culture with the group and have celebrated Burns Night and St Andrews Day together!

The New Roots staff work with other teams to plan different opportunities for the young people. For example, we talked to the Fire Service and they invited us to come and visit the Fire Station. The group learned about the job of a Fire Fighter and about fire safety.

In summer 2024 and 2025, the group planned a summer programme together. Many of the young people go to school or college, and wanted some fun activities and time to be with their friends during the holidays. We held in group planning sessions, where the young people talked about what they wanted to do during the summer. The team arranged activities based on what they told us, including fishing, a visit to Trimontium museum, sports activities with Multiply and different trips around the Borders.

We asked the young people for their views on the summer programme:

'We got to visit beautiful and historic places' 'We saw different views of trees and hills'

We also asked the staff to let us know what they thought about the summer activities:

'It was amazing to see the group bonding together, they were all very relaxed in each other's company by the end'.





St Abbs

From June-December 2025, the group partnered up with the National Trust for Scotland at St Abbs Head. This was part of a programme called the Audience Development Fund. This funding was used to plan 5 trips to St Abbs Head, where the group took part in different activities to develop outdoor skills and learn about wildlife conservation.

The group wanted to take part in this programme as they had visited St Abbs Head before with New Roots and they loved seeing the different landscapes and learning about nature. The team at St Abbs Head worked with the New Roots Group to plan the visits together, focusing on what the young people wanted to see, do and learn.

The visits included learning about animals such as birds, seals, moths and butterflies, and trying wildlife management activities like gorse cutting. The funding meant that all the learning materials could be translated into the young people's home languages and the young people were given all the equipment needed for each visit, such as a cosy hat for winter visits and welly boots for wet activities.

Impact

Since 2023, New Roots has provided a safe and welcoming space for UAS young people. It has allowed young people to meet other young people in similar circumstances and build friendships. The relaxed environment of the group has given the young people time and space to get to know workers who can be there to support them when they need it.





Over time, the young people have become comfortable in the group and they have grown in confidence together. This sense of safety has allowed the group to start working on participation projects together, such as the young people having a say in the welcome pack for young people who arrive in the Borders and creating a video for them. These projects hope to bring about positive changes to the experiences of UAS young people in the Borders!

Through working with different teams across the Borders to plan activities, the group have built relationships with different services. This has meant that there have been more opportunities for the group. For example, the National Trust for Scotland opportunity came from a visit that the young people had really enjoyed the previous year. These activities encourage the young people to try new things, visit new places, challenge themselves and maybe find something that they love to do.

Supporting Children and Families from Ukraine

When children and families had to leave Ukraine because of war, lots of people worked together to help them feel safe, welcome and supported when they arrived in the Borders.

Getting children into education

- Children and young people were helped to start nursery or school as quickly as possible, even if they didn't have all their paperwork.
- Schools made sure children could go to a local school near where they were living, including if they were staying in temporary accommodation or hotels.
- School routines helped children feel safe, settled and part of a community.

Help with language and communication

- Many children spoke Ukrainian as their first language, so schools:
- Used translation tools, pictures and visual timetables
  - Provided bilingual teachers and support staff
  - Used iPads and apps to help children communicate and learn
- Adults were careful to respect children's language, culture and identity.

Support for wellbeing and feelings

- Schools used nurturing and trauma-informed approaches, understanding that children may have experienced fear, loss or worry.
- Staff focused on helping children feel:
  - Safe
  - Listened to
  - Cared for
- Extra help was available from psychologists and support teams if children needed it.

Practical support at school

- Children were supported with:
  - Free school meals
  - School transport, if needed
  - School uniforms and clothing grants
- Schools helped families apply for financial support while they were settling into the UK.

Keeping children safe

- Adults followed child protection rules to keep children safe.
- Extra checks were made for hosting families.
- If a child arrived without a parent or carer, they were given extra protection and care.

Helping children feel welcome

- Schools helped other pupils understand what was happening in Ukraine so they could:
  - Be kind and welcoming
  - Avoid asking upsetting questions
  - Support new classmates
- Children from Ukrainian and Russian backgrounds were treated with respect and care.

Children's rights in action

This support helped protect children's rights to:

- Education
- Safety
- Being listened to
- Health and wellbeing
- Being treated fairly and with dignity

42



EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

ARTICLE 42

Everyone Must Know Children's Rights

Training and Awareness Raising

We chose to focus on Article 42 because it is all about making sure everyone knows that children have rights. This means helping children, families, teachers, doctors, nurses, police, fire service and community members understand what those rights are and why they matter. By raising awareness across the Borders, we can make sure children feel confident to speak up, take part in decisions that affect them, and know that adults are listening and taking action. Focusing on Article 42 also helps schools, services, and the council to embed children's rights in the way they work, so that all other rights—like the right to be safe, the right to an education, and the right to have a say — are fully supported and respected.



A UNCRC Working Group
A dedicated UNCRC group was set up to oversee training, raise awareness, and help services work together to make children's rights real and help promote children's rights everywhere.

We share children's rights messages in the media, through press releases, on social media platforms, and by celebrating **World Children's Day** (November 20th), in schools, NHS and council buildings. We even light up the council's headquarters building blue, helping to spread awareness across the whole Scottish Borders.

Check out our UNCRC newsletter **(Appendix E)** — released on 16th July 2025 a celebration of promoting rights in our communities one year on from rights becoming part of Scots law.

Child Friendly Logo

Scottish Borders

Child Friendly



As part of our work under **Article 42 of the UNCRC**, we wanted to make children's rights easy to see and understand. Young people designed a **child-friendly logo** in a competition and then helped judge the entries alongside adults from the NHS, schools, the council, and community groups. They even decided the judging rules themselves and chose the winning design.

The logo will be used by services and groups that are working towards **showing they take children's rights seriously.** Seeing the logo lets children know that there are services in place where their rights matter and their voices are listened to.



Youth Borders Update — What We've Been Doing to Promote Rights in the Borders!

In January 2025, we shared a first look at our UNCRC Youth Voice Documentary. It's a 55 minute film that helps explain children's rights and shows how young people across the Borders share their voices. The film was officially released on our YouthBorders YouthTube channel in November 2025 on National Children's Rights Day, and lots of organisations have now seen it.

In September 2025, we chose our first UNCRC Ambassadors — Jamie Bowers Clark and Christie McAlpine. They help us make sure young people's voices are heard and that we follow children's rights in everything we do.

We also started a UNCRC Roundtable, which will meet in early 2026. This group brings people together to talk about children's rights and make plans to help organisations across the Borders listen to young people better.

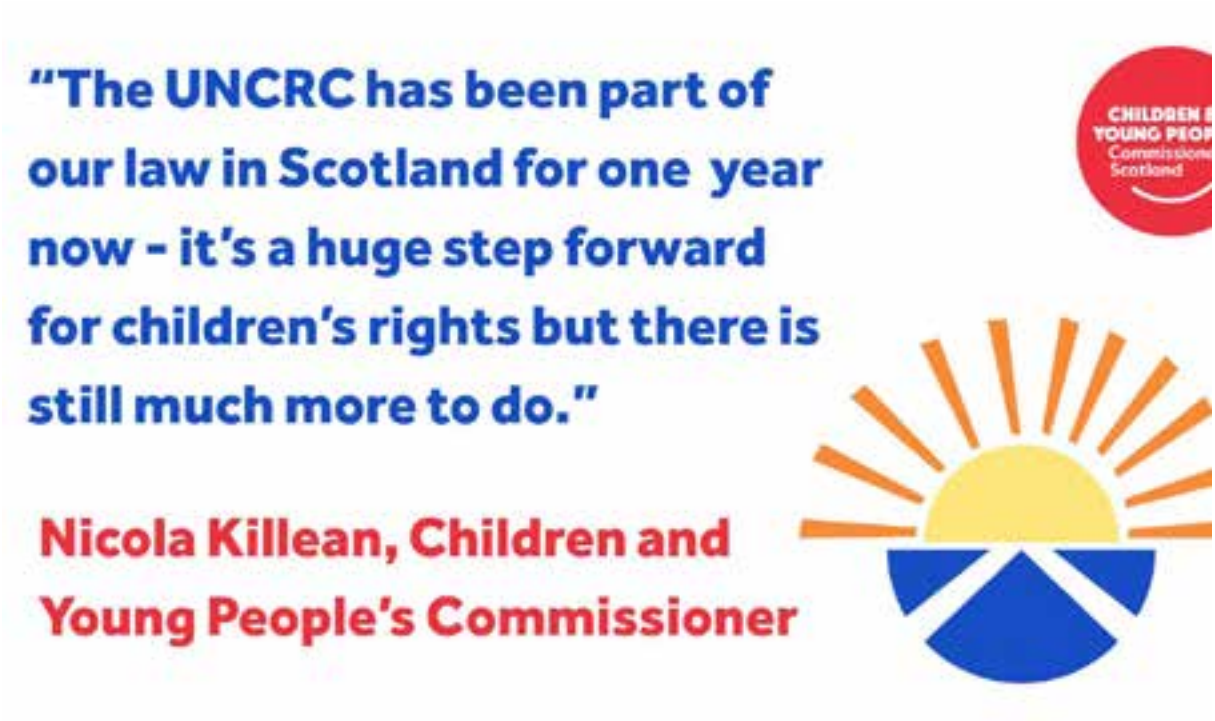
Impact

Helping people understand children's rights, celebrating them, and talking about them means we get people thinking about rights before they act. Many services, schools, and elected members now contact us to make sure children and young people are included in decision-making. Many schools, nurseries, and even childminders contact us weekly to learn more about the Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA), often as a direct result of posts seen on social media or our internal intranet. This increased awareness can only be positive in improving children's experiences, ensuring their voices are heard, and supporting services to make decisions that respect their rights.

Other work that has been happening in the Borders



Listening to you…
What will we do next? 2026–2029



How we chose what to work on next

Children's rights all matter. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child works **as a whole** — every right is linked, and **no right is more important than another**. We believe this is really important. We will always work to make sure all rights are met, but we also know that at different times some rights may need more focus than others.

To help us decide what to focus on next, we didn't just decide on our own. We worked with children and young people to hear what matters most to them right now.

We spoke with 24 focus groups made up of children and young people from different backgrounds all across the Borders. They helped us think about which children's rights the council and its partners should look at developing over the next three years, so that children's rights are not just words on paper but are real in everyday life. We totalled up the number of votes each article received to determine the top six overall.

WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US

From these conversations, children and young people told us that the following rights should be our main priorities:

TOP 6 RIGHTS TO FOCUS ON NEXT

ARTICLE 27
I have the right to have a proper home, food and clothing



ARTICLE 16
I have the right to keep some things private



ARTICLE 33
I have the right to be protected from dangerous drugs



ARTICLE 12
I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously





ARTICLE 24
I have the right to be as healthy as possible



ARTICLE 2
All children have these rights no matter what their differences are

These articles have helped shape the **actions we will take forward** over the next three years. They are:



FOOD, CLOTHING, HOUSING, WARMTH, SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

1 Strengthen **whole-family poverty responses** (education, housing, health, third sector) rather than service-by-service approaches.

2 Embed a **children's rights impact check** in decisions about housing, homelessness, school costs, and transport.

3 Expand **cost-of-the-school-day** work (uniform, trips, digital access), with pupils involved in identifying barriers.

4 Improve **early identification and referral** pathways for families struggling with essentials (warmth, food, furnishings).

5 Support schools and partners to provide **non-stigmatising access** to food, clothing, and essentials



PHYSICAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

6 Embed children's rights into health improvement planning, including mental health, oral health, and physical activity.

7 Increase preventative and early-help approaches, especially in schools and communities.

8 Strengthen joint work between education, health and youth services on mental wellbeing and resilience.

9 Ensure children can access health information in ways they understand.

10 Reduce barriers to services for children with additional needs or those in rural areas.



RESPECT FOR PERSONAL LIFE, DATA, AND DIGNITY

11 Ensure children's **personal information is handled carefully** across all services.

12 Make privacy information **clear and age-appropriate**.

13 Review policies to ensure children are treated with **dignity and respect**, especially in education and care settings.

14 Balance safeguarding with respect for children's **growing independence**.

15 Support children to understand their **digital privacy and online safety**.



EVERY CHILD, NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE

16 Use data to identify which groups of children experience poorer outcomes (e.g. disabled children, care-experienced children, minority ethnic children, young carers).

17 Take targeted action where rights are most at risk, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

18 Strengthen staff training on children's rights, equality and inclusion.

19 Ensure children who are seldom heard have safe and supported ways to participate.

20 Monitor decisions to check they do not unintentionally disadvantage certain groups.



A VOICE, AND INFLUENCE

21 Embed participation and children's rights into decision-making across all services.

22 Create safe, inclusive ways for children and young people to share their views, including those who are seldom heard.

23 Ensure children's views are considered and influence outcomes, not just collected.

24 Support staff and partners with training on rights-based participation and the Lundy Model.

25 Provide clear feedback to children on what happened because of their views.

26 Independent Advocacy

27 IN SHORT — ALL SERVICES EMBED THE YELL APPROACH!

28 Co-design child friendly versions of the 12-25 engagement strategy YELL

29 Co-design a new 0–12 engagement strategy.



PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS

30 Strengthen **preventative education** that is honest, age-appropriate and rights-respecting.

31 Involve children in shaping messages about substance use.

32 Work with partners to reduce **environmental risks** (e.g. access, exposure).

33 Provide **early support and help**, not just enforcement or punishment.

34 Link managing substance use work to mental health and wellbeing strategies.

35 Protect children from harm when a parent or carer is affected by alcohol or drug use

HOW WE WILL MAKE THIS HAPPEN

The work to improve these rights will be supported by the **Children and Young People's Planning Partnership (CYPPP).**

The CYPPP is a group of organisations that work together to support children, young people and families. This includes the council, health services, schools, police, charities and community groups. By working together, they can make sure children get the right help, at the right time, in the right way.



This work will be supported through CYPPP groups, called:

- **A Good Childhood** – helping children grow up safe, happy and supported
- **Whole Family Support** – supporting families together, not just individuals
- **Supporting the Workforce** – making sure adults who work with children understand children's rights
- **Planning and Building Capacity** – making sure services are ready and able to meet children's needs

By listening to children and young people and working together across services, we will continue to **make children's rights real** in everyday life.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY



Ella and Reece from YELL group
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pocKU-rh6QE

MESSAGES FROM DECISION MAKERS

Scottish Borders Council

Thank you for reading the Scottish Borders Children's Rights Report for 2023–2026!

We hope this report has shown how important your rights are — and how much your voices matter. Everything we do is shaped by children and young people like you, and we're really proud of the progress we've made together.

Your ideas, your honesty, and your creativity help us make the Scottish Borders a better place for everyone. And even though we've already achieved a lot, we're excited to keep going. There's always more we can do to make sure every child, and young person feels safe, included, respected, and heard.

A huge thank you to all the young people, families, schools, community groups, and partners who helped make this work possible. We couldn't do it without you.

We're looking forward to the journey ahead — and we can't wait to keep working with you to make sure your rights are at the heart of everything we do.



David Robertson
Chief Executive
Scottish Borders Council

March 2026

Commitment to UNCRC Incorporation from CYPPP

Thank you for reading this Children's Rights Report. We want to finish by speaking directly to the children and young people across our region who are at the heart of everything we do.

Our partnership — schools, health services, the council, the police, and lots of local organisations — work together because we care about your wellbeing, your safety, and your future. Your rights matter, and every adult who supports you has a responsibility to make sure those rights are respected.

We want you to grow up feeling safe, listened to, included, and able to be yourself.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), The Promise, and Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) guide us all in making sure your rights aren't just words on a page, but something you experience every day. That means you should have people who support you, places where you feel you belong, and opportunities to learn, play, and reach your goals and ambitions.

Most importantly, your voice matters. Your ideas, your experiences, your hopes, and even your worries, help shape the decisions adults make about services, activities, and support in the community. When you speak, we listen — and then we act to support you.

We know things won't always be perfect, and we are committed to doing better. We will keep learning, improving, and working with you to make sure every young person in our area can grow up happy, healthy, and confident.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

We're here for you, we're listening, and we will keep working hard — together — to make sure all your rights are understood and recognised further.



Julie Pirone
Chair, Children and Young People's Planning Partnership (CYPPP)
Scottish Borders Council

March 2026

NHS Borders

Hello!

My name is Sohail Bhatti, and I am the Director of Public Health for NHS Borders. I want to say a big thank you to every child and young person who has shared their ideas, thoughts, and experiences with us.

This report is all about your rights — the things that help keep you healthy, safe, included, and listened to. Your rights matter every day, wherever you are: at school, at home, in your neighbourhood, and whenever you use health services.

This report looks back at the work we've done together over the last few years to support and protect your rights. We know that growing up today can be fun but also challenging. That's why hearing from you is so important. Your voices help us understand what is working well and what we need to make better. They help us build services that are fair and supportive for every child in the Borders. As Director of Public Health, I'm looking forward to sharing with you my special public health report on Children and Young People later this year.

In this report you're about to read, we explain what we have done so far — and what we still need to keep working on. We learn from your ideas and your hopes for the future. When you tell us that something needs to change, we take it seriously. Your rights belong to you, and our job is to help protect them and make sure they are put into practice in real life.

Thank you again for speaking up and helping us make NHS Borders a better place for all children and young people. We will keep listening, learning, and working together — because your voice matters, and your future matters too.

With warm wishes,



Sohail Bhatti
Director of Public Health
NHS Borders

March 2026

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Children's Rights Posters

Appendix B
Organisations that focus on children's rights

Appendix C
The Promise

Appendix D
Nicotine Prevention Toolkit Case Study

Appendix E
UNCRC Newsletter

Appendix A


1
-18
DEFINITION OF A CHILD
2
NO DISCRIMINATION
3
BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD
4
MAKING RIGHTS REAL
5
FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP
6
LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT
7
NAME AND NATIONALITY
8
IDENTITY
9
KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER
10
CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES
11
PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING
12
RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS
13
SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY
14
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION
15
SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS
16
PROTECTION OF PRIVACY
17
ACCESS TO INFORMATION
18
RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS
19
PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE
20
CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES
21
CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED
22
REFUGEE CHILDREN
23
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
24
HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT
25
REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT
26
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP
27
FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME
28
ACCESS TO EDUCATION
29
AIMS OF EDUCATION
30
MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION
31
REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS
32
PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK
33
PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS
34
PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE
35
PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING
36
PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION
37
CHILDREN IN DETENTION
38
PROTECTION IN WAR
39
RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION
40
CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW
41
BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES
42
EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
43-54
HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Appendix A


UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Children's Commissioner
Survival
Development
Participation
Protection

Appendix B

Organisations That Support Children's Rights

1. The Scottish Government
2. UNICEF UK
3. Together Scotland
4. Young Scot
5. Children's Parliament
6. Scottish Youth Parliament
7. Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

1. The Scottish Government
Who they are: The Scottish Government is the group of people who make decisions about important services in Scotland, like schools, hospitals and transport.

What they do: They create rules and plans to help make life better for children, families and communities.

When set up: It was created on 1 July 1999 after people in Scotland voted to have their own parliament again.

2. UNICEF UK
Who they are: UNICEF UK is part of UNICEF – the world's biggest children's organisation.

What they do: They work to make sure all children in the UK and around the world are safe, healthy, educated and treated fairly. They raise money, run programmes in schools and hospitals, and speak up for children's rights.

When set up: UNICEF UK was founded in 1956.

3. Together Scotland (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
Who they are: Together Scotland is a group of children's charities who work together to protect and promote children's rights.

What they do: They help organisations understand children's rights, support training, campaign for fair laws, and make sure children's voices are heard by decision-makers.

When set up: The organisation became a registered charity in 1999.

4. Young Scot
Who they are: Young Scot is a charity that supports young people aged 11–25 across Scotland.

What they do: They provide trusted information, opportunities to get involved, volunteering, and discounts through the Young Scot card.

When set up: Young Scot was founded in 1981.

5. Children's Parliament
Who they are: A national organisation that gives younger children a safe and creative way to share their ideas and be involved in decisions.

What they do: They use art, play and creativity to help children speak about what matters to them and influence adults, services, and laws.

When set up: Children's Parliament was created in 1996.

6. Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)
Who they are: A democratic organisation led by young people aged 14–25.

What they do: Members (called MSYPs) are elected across Scotland to represent young people's views. They campaign on issues like mental health, rights, transport and equality.

When set up: The SYP was officially launched on 30 June 1999, the day before the Scottish Parliament reopened.

7. Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland
Who they are: An independent commissioner who makes sure adults, services and the government respect children's rights in Scotland.

What they do: Checks laws and policies, investigates problems affecting children, and listens directly to children and young people.

When set up: The office was created by law in 2003 and the first Commissioner started work in April 2004.

Appendix C

The Promise

Scotland's Promise is that all children will grow up loved, safe and respected, so that they realise their full potential. The Promise is a plan that sets out the change that must take place to achieve this for our care experienced children and young people.

This promise was made after a review of the care system, where over 5000 care experienced children, young people and adults, as well as those who work in care, shared their experience of care in Scotland. This review listened to their views on what needed to change, and the conclusions of this were published in the Promise.

The Promise tells adults that they must work together to listen to our young people, to make changes based on what they have told us and to make their experiences better.

In the Scottish Borders we have a team to ensure that we are fulfilling our commitment to keep 'The Promise'. The team consists of:






Hannah Hawthorn, The Promise Lead Officer
Cory Paterson, Promise Project Worker
Christina Hendry, Promise Participation and Engagement Officer
Amber Storie, Promise Quality Improvement Officer

We support care experienced children and young people to have their voices heard through our Champions Board. This includes our Champs Participation Group, School Hubs, New Roots Group and Champs Connect Project.

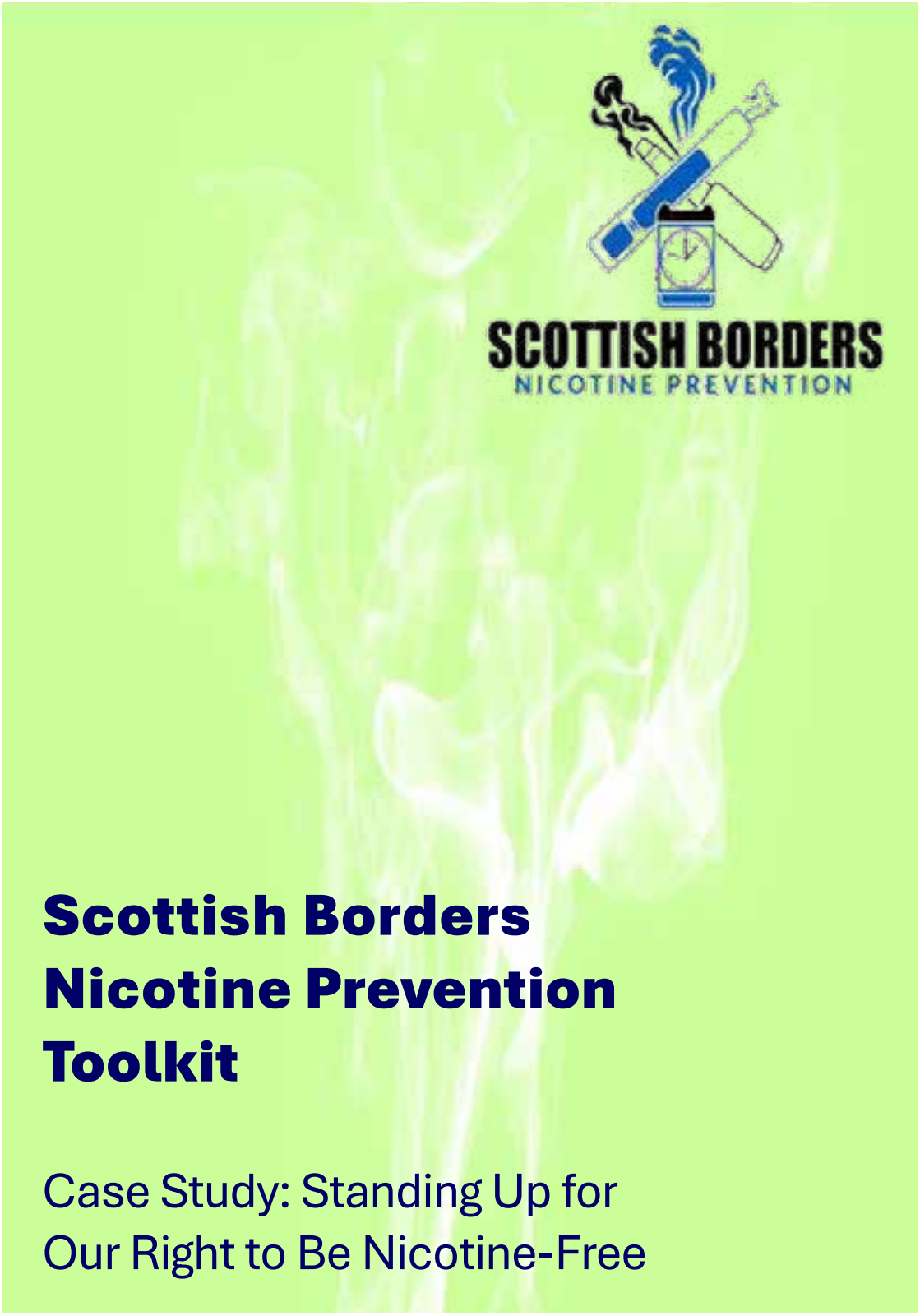
We share our knowledge by training different teams of workers. This includes Social Work, the Whole Family Support Service, and we have started a new project with schools in 2024 called Together for the Promise. This helps to make sure they know about the Promise and understand how to keep the Promise in their own role to make things better for care experienced children and young people.

We work closely with other teams to make sure that Children's Rights are being kept and progressed in the Borders.

And we celebrate all our children and young people that have experienced care through planning exciting events and activities for Care Day and Care Experienced Week each year!

Appendix D

Nicotine Prevention Toolkit Case Study





What was the issue?

Across Scotland, more young people are using nicotine — especially through vaping. Many young people told us they had **never smoked cigarettes** but were still becoming addicted to nicotine through vapes and other products like nicotine pouches.

This raised concerns about:

- Young people's **health and wellbeing**
- The normalisation of nicotine use
- Young people not having clear, honest information about risks

Under the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, young people have the right to:

- **Good health** (Article 24)
- **Reliable information** (Article 17)
- **Protection from harmful substances** (Article 33)
- **A say in decisions that affect them** (Article 12)

This project started because those rights matter.



What did we do?

A **Nicotine Prevention Working Group** was set up in the Scottish Borders. It brought together people from:

- Health
- Education
- Community services
- Trading Standards
- Children's rights and youth participation

Young people were placed **at the heart of the work**, not as an afterthought.

Together, they created the **Scottish Borders Nicotine Prevention Toolkit**, which:

- Uses a **rights-based approach**
- Is for schools, youth groups, community settings and families
- Focuses on **prevention, education and support**, not punishment



Listening to young people

Using the **YELL – Youth Engagement: Listen to Learn** approach, young people were asked:

- What do you know about nicotine and vaping?
- How does nicotine use affect young people's lives and rights?
- What support would actually help?
- What needs to change in schools and communities?

Young people were clear:

- Vaping was the biggest issue
- New nicotine products are replacing vapes
- Messages need to be honest, not scare-based
- Young people want support, not blame



What changed because of young people's voices?

Because young people spoke up, the Toolkit includes:

- **Clear, evidence-based information** that makes sense
- Resources for **early years through to senior phase**
- A **Nicotine-Free Environments Charter**
- **Cessation support pathways** for under-12s and 12+
- A focus on **choice, support and wellbeing**

This helped change the narrative from *control* to *care*.



Trying it out in schools

Two schools piloted the approach:

- **Berwickshire High School**
- **Galashiels Academy**

The pilots tested:

- How easy it was to access support
- How schools, health and young people could work together
- The addition of a wellbeing advisor having a designated space and time within the school setting
- What needed to improve

After learning from the first pilot, the second used:

- A **pupil-led approach**
- Clearer communication
- A whole-school and community focus
- Promotion of the wellbeing service and advisor in school.

This made a big difference.

In this video pupils share their experience of working with the Nicotine Prevention Working Group and helping to shape their campus into a nicotine free environment.

Reflection from the Gala Pupil Group



What has been achieved so far?

- ✓ Young people helped design real change
- ✓ School-led nicotine-free charters and posters
- ✓ Clear support pathways for quitting nicotine
- ✓ Strong partnership working across services
- ✓ Young people influencing **national discussions** on tobacco and vaping
- ✓ Meetings with Scottish Government Ministers
- ✓ Young people invited to share views directly with Parliament

Young people weren't just consulted — **they influenced decisions**.





Young People in Action

- Presenting at the Launch
- Meeting Jenni Minto Scottish Government Minister for Public Health & Women's Health
- Visiting Scottish Parliament and meeting Neil Gray Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
- Speaking to John Lamont MP for the Scottish Borders















What happens next?

The ambition is for:

- The Toolkit to be used in **all schools and community settings**
- More places to become **nicotine-free through a rights-based approach**
- Ongoing support for young people and families who want help to quit
- Continued youth involvement in shaping prevention work
- Commitment to ongoing support for young people and families who want help to quit through the NHS Wellbeing Service.

This project proves that when young people speak, change happens.

Your views can shape services, influence laws, and protect the rights of others.

Nae Vapin' Nae Botha'

Thanks

This Toolkit has been pulled together by Lizzie Macleish, Health Improvement Specialist Public Health, Sophie Jerrom, Wellbeing Co-ordinator/Smoking Cessation Lead and Shona Easingwood, Youth Participation and Engagement Officer for Education alongside the Scottish Borders Nicotine Prevention Working Group.

There are many people we need to thank for their support and involvement in the development of the Nicotine Prevention Toolkit.

Firstly, we would like to thank the young people who gave us their time to participate and took part in the focus groups. This has informed the development of this Toolkit and given insight. Without their participation and engagement this Toolkit could not have been developed.

The Nicotine Prevention Working Group would also like to thank TD1 Youth Hub, Galashiels Academy and Eyemouth High School for the development of the graphics and logo. As well as Abigail from Eyemouth High School and Mark Bruce, who developed the Trading Standards video.

The Nicotine Prevention Working Group would like to extend their thanks to the following organisations and teams who have supported in the development of the Toolkit.

NHS Borders

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Appendix E

UNCRC Newsletter

UNCRC NEWSLETTER

One Year On: Advancing Children's Rights in Our Communities. | **Wednesday 16th July 2025**

Headlines:

In Their Words: One Year of Youth Voice and Rights in Action cross the Borders

RRSA Increase in Schools Accreditation

Progress, Participation & Partnerships through Youth Borders

Celebrating a Year of Children's Rights in the Borders

Child Friendly Identity in the Borders is Born

One Year of Children's Rights in Scots Law – What's Been Happening in the Borders? We've been busy putting children's rights into action! Here's a snapshot of how we've been listening, empowering, and protecting our young people.





Young People's Voices at the Heart:

The YELL Strategy (Youth Engagement: Listen to Learn) officially launched with a bang – putting participation at the heart of decision-making.

Young people helped design it, and now they're helping deliver it – across schools, services, and communities.

Rights Respecting Schools on the Rise: Borders schools are jumping on board with a rise in RRSA accreditations – showing children's rights are being lived, learned & led. 14 schools were successful in achieving bronze and silver status this session.



Designed by young people, for young people.: A brand-new child-friendly logo and guidelines created – by young people, for young people.

Training Champions for Change: Elected members, third sector leads & area partnerships trained on children's rights – building a system that understands & champions young voices

Young People at the Table: Youth-led initiatives presented directly to the Public Protection Committee and Lord Lieutenants – spotlighting youth action across the Borders.

YELL-ing Loud and Clear: Multiple consultations with young people helped shape education, public health, social care & transformation plans – all in line with our YELL (Youth Engagement Listen to Learn) Strategy.

Raising Rights Awareness: Our comms plan hit home – rights-based news, events & achievements shared widely on social media & beyond.

Youth Borders UNCRC Celebration: Our third sector youth groups celebrated children's rights in style – an evening of celebration with a movie première showcasing the excellent work by partners upholding rights.

Keep an eye out – the Council HQ will be lit up blue to celebrate one year of children's rights in Scots law!

Want to get involved or find out more? Email cyppp@scotborders.gov.uk and help us keep children's rights front and centre in the Borders!. Thank you for reading!

You can get this document on audio CD, in large print, and various other formats by contacting us at the address below. In addition, contact the address below for information on language translations, additional copies, or to arrange for an officer to meet with you to explain any areas of the publication that you would like clarified.

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Printed in the Scottish Borders. Designed by Scottish Borders Council Graphic Design Section. GS/06/26.