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Children and Young People of Scotland

16 August 2019

I am writing to thank you for the amazing contribution that you have made during 2018-2019 to the development of policies aimed at improving the experiences and life chances of children and young people across Scotland.

Children and young people from all parts of Scotland have participated in many different ways. It is important that we highlight and celebrate these contributions.

Last year was our first ever Year of Young People. Many young people contributed to the development and delivery of this very special year. In particular, I want to acknowledge the young people from Communic18, who helped direct how the Year was run, and the YOYP Ambassadors, responsible for promoting activities in their local communities and helping to challenge negative stereotypes of young people. A number of you have reported back that the Year has enabled you to develop new skills; deepened your knowledge; significantly improved your confidence and that these new skills, knowledge and confidence have made a substantial impact on other areas of your lives. We will continue to work to ensure a true legacy from the Year of Young People 2018.

On 5 March 2019, I had the pleasure and privilege to attend our third annual meeting of Cabinet Ministers with children and young people from the Scottish Youth Parliament and Children's Parliament. This is an important opportunity for children and young people to lead discussions and to raise issues that matter to them with senior Ministers, including the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, and Deputy First Minister, John Swinney. The children and young people identified a wide range of issues and priorities that are important to children in Scotland, including poverty, relationships with teachers, bereavement and public transport. We have published 18 actions that we will take forward in partnership over the coming year. We have also made a new film about the event. To view the actions and film, please click [here](#). The Deputy First Minister also sent a letter on 19 June to key partners about these actions and has written about them on his [blog](#). Progress reports on agreed actions from the [2017](#) and [2018](#) meetings with the Cabinet are available on the Scottish Government website.

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The first ever First Minister's Question Time for young people also took place on 12 September 2018. This event was attended by over 100 children and young people representing a wide range of backgrounds. A second event took place in Edinburgh on 23 April, where questions on the dangers of social media, climate change and the length of the school day, were put to the First Minister.

Children and Young People also contributed directly to the development of the [Progressing the Human Rights of Children in Scotland: An Action Plan 2018-2021](#), which was published just before Christmas 2018. As part of the development of the Action Plan, I had the opportunity to meet with children and young people from particular groups, including young parents and LGBT young people. A Rights Review Event was organised with members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Scottish Government Ministers and senior officials and the Children's Parliament also arranged a number of events for younger children.

The 3 year Action Plan includes actions which seek to significantly strengthen how children and young people experience their rights. These include our commitment to: incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law; to work with children and young people to develop a strategic approach to participation; and to develop and deliver through co-production, an ambitious programme to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights. These actions were influenced by the feedback that you provided.

The Action Plan also includes a list of the other initiatives, currently being progressed across all areas of the Scottish Government, which seek to take forward the rights of the child. These include measures to address issues such as reducing child poverty; promoting health, including mental health; and supporting diversity.

As Minister for Children and Young People, I am committed to ensuring during 2019 - the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC - that children's rights are at the forefront of everything we do. For example, we are currently [consulting](#) on the best way to incorporate the UNCRC into Scots law to improve the lives of children and young people. While I am keen to hear the views of experts in the field, public authorities and organisations that work with and on behalf of children and young people, it is very important that we hear the views of children and young people themselves as well as those of their families. For that reason we are working with a number of organisations to hear directly from children and young people.

The voices of all children and young people matter. I hope that you will keep sharing your views with us and telling us how we can continue to make the lives of children and young people across Scotland better.

With very best wishes



MAREE TODD

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