



SUPPORTING
CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS
UNCRC IN SCOTLAND

Children's Human Rights Budgeting Action Inquiry & Seminar

Improvement Service with the Observatory of Children's Rights Scotland

Thanks everyone. I have found this afternoon's sessions really interesting and thought provoking on how we can take this work forward in Scotland. I am pleased to be able to share some more information about a piece of work that the Improvement Service has been doing as part of our work to support local authorities to work on implementation of the UNCRC across local government.

I think most of you here will already be aware of the Improvement Service but for those who are not, we are the national improvement organisation for local government in Scotland working alongside local authorities on a range of topics and projects focused on delivering the best quality of public services. Our UNCRC Implementation Project is focused on supporting local authorities to develop their approach to children's rights and to meet the requirements of the new UNCRC legislation. We work in a variety of different ways including knowledge exchange, peer support, self assessment and developing tools and resources that can support them to take a children's rights approach in their area.

As part of this programme of work, the topic of children's rights budgeting is one local authorities often cite as an area that is challenging and where there are few examples of how to put the theory into practice.

Following on from a focus group discussion with some local authorities, we decided to take a more in-depth look at children's rights budgeting, engaging with those working in finance specifically to explore the real context at local government level.

.Budgeting Action Inquiry was established to bring together 6 local authorities who are interested in developing their approach. With the support of Elaine Kemp, Director of Finance at North Lanarkshire, through her role in CIPFA The Children's Rights Budgeting Action Inquiry was established with the participation of 6 local authorities.

The Inquiry is designed to allow participants to actively work on building their understanding of children's human rights and what approaches to implementing children's rights budgeting might work at local level. The approach is focused on learning and having access to ongoing support and time to reflect and share their experiences with others. The local authorities who are taking part are:

- North Lanarkshire
- Glasgow
- Shetland
- North Ayrshire
- Inverclyde
- Falkirk

The approach does not ask local authorities to be experts in children's rights or to agree to undertake a full children's rights approach to their budget immediately. It is about exploring what might enable the consideration of children's rights in the budget process, understanding what is needed to support this and testing some approaches in a considered way.

Action Inquiry has also been established in recognition that this focus for budgeting work is new. However, the concepts of gender-based budgeting and consideration of equal opportunities and understanding the socio-economic impact of decisions has been established for some time. The work is also taking place at a time of severe pressure on local authority finances where the demands on public funds is increasing.

We are delighted to be working with the Scottish Observatory of Children's Rights in the inquiry – thank you to Debbie and Eloise. And I am delighted that members of the inquiry are here today – both in person and online.

What we have looked at so far:

Members of the Action Inquiry have come in with a real honesty about the context in which they are trying to work. They have shared their concern about how they can meet their legal requirement to publish a balanced budget while at the same time, consider the requirements of the UNCRC to uphold children's rights.

- They have shared the context in which they are receiving an increased number of objections to funding cuts raised by parents and the public which reference the UNCRC and are seeking ways to address these appropriately.
- Participants expressed concerns about scenarios where they have to make difficult decisions that may negatively impact children's rights and in all these scenarios are keen to learn ways to reduce the risk faced by local authorities as a result of the new legislation.

We have drawn from various resources, particularly the work of the SHRC Human rights budgeting to look at income generation, budget allocation, spend and scrutiny in order to give a framework in to consider the inherent obligations of the UNCRC. We have also spent time talking about the PANEL principles, potential and limitations of CRWIA and FAIR approach in budget decision making.

I applaud members for their honesty in the Action Inquiry so far. This work is hard and the language of rights can often be unfamiliar. One of the key observations so far is that tools such as CRWIA feel like we are 'tinkering at the edges' of this work and we are really putting children's rights at the centre. While there has been lots of focus on early intervention and prevention, the language of rights is often not explicit. The space to consider these approaches feels limited due to ring fencing, challenges arising from the cost of living crisis affecting their ability to keep public buildings open and reducing capacity overall.

Following today we have a few more sessions of the enquiry to be held and I am really looking forward to what future discussions bring, informed by the presentations this morning.

Action Inquiry involves learning by doing and sharing / discussing insights from the process with others and we look forward to sharing this more widely in future.

One of our participants Martin Booth is here and I am delighted that he can share more insights into this work from his perspective.