

# Finance and Public Administration Committee

## Framework for the Resource Spending Review

### Submission from Children in Scotland

Dear Finance and Public Administration Committee,

I am pleased to provide an email submission on behalf of Children in Scotland and the Children's Sector Strategic Forum to your current call for evidence on the Framework for Resource Spending Review.

### About Children in Scotland

*Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.*

*By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.*

*We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.*

### Framework for Resource Spending Review

Children in Scotland intends to engage with the Resource Spending Review through the Scottish Government consultation process and has some initial comments that could support the Committee in its inquiry.

Firstly, we believe that the priorities set out within the Resource Spending Review are all broadly speaking in the right area. Children in Scotland's [Manifesto for 2021-2026](#) outlines the key steps we believe are necessary to improve the lives of children, young people and families. We highlight that action to address child poverty, avert the climate emergency and reduce inequalities are vital to support a society where all children in Scotland have an equal opportunity to flourish. However, it is worth noting that we believe that actions to support a stronger, fairer and greener economy will require a shift in Scotland's current approach to the economy, as outlined below.

#### 1. Sustainability of funding for the children's sector

Our 2021-2026 manifesto called for:

- Sustainable funding for children’s services across the statutory, third and private sectors, across all five years of the next Scottish Parliament

We know that many of the services supporting children, young people and families are stretched and while there have been important recent developments such as the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, we are still deeply concerned that organisations do not have the funding to plan long term and to develop the relationships that are vital to supporting the people they work with.

We would encourage the committee to explore future funding for the children’s sector and to take a focus on how the spending review can ensure sustainability for all organisations and stability for the children, young people and families that they work with.

## 2. Wellbeing Economy and Budget

If Scotland is to achieve its aims for a stronger, fairer and greener economy, we believe it needs to move towards a wellbeing economy approach. The current growth-focussed model does not support positive outcomes for all children, young people and families living in Scotland. At current projections Scotland will not achieve set child poverty targets by 2030 and evidence suggests that increasing numbers of children and young people face issues with their physical and mental health<sup>1</sup>. Ultimately, if we are serious about addressing these significant challenges, we require an economic model designed to prioritise wellbeing outcomes rather than one that has growth as its central ambition.

In 2019, Children in Scotland, Carnegie UK Trust and Cattanach commissioned the [Being Bold](#) report, written by Katherine Trebeck. The report, published in [March last year](#), outlines an approach which could be taken to change Scotland’s economic approach to prioritise children’s wellbeing. Our manifesto called on the Scottish Government to:

- Produce a comprehensive Wellbeing Budget by 2022. This will ensure that the annual Scottish budget is designed and implemented with the goal of improving the wellbeing of all citizens in Scotland, including children, young people and families

We continue our engagement with the Scottish Government about their plans for a Wellbeing Budget as part of submissions to the Resource Spending Review and in the lead-up to the 2022 Scottish Budget. We would encourage the Committee to explore this avenue with the Scottish Government as part of this enquiry and we would be more than happy to discuss this further with Committee members.

### 3. Child Poverty

Children in Scotland would also encourage the Committee to consider all the actions contained within the [Children in Scotland Manifesto](#) and the [End Child Poverty Coalition Manifesto](#) for the 2021 elections.

Tackling child poverty is rightly at the heart of the review and recent action to increase the Scottish Child Payment is welcome. However, even with the doubling of the Scottish Child Payment, we are still not on track to meet our Child Poverty targets.

We would encourage the committee to explore how the calls in these manifestos could intersect with the review. We would also encourage the Committee to engage with the End Child Poverty Coalition.

### 4. Strategic Forum

Children in Scotland co-ordinates the Children's Sector Strategic and Policy Forum. This Forum brings together senior leaders across the Children's Sector to discuss matters of shared importance, including child poverty and outcomes budgeting. The Strategic Forum supported the commissioning of the *Being Bold* report and continues to work to achieve the implementation of the report's recommendations.

We would be happy to facilitate a meeting between the Committee and members of the Strategic Forum as part of the evidence gathering for this inquiry.

We would also be happy to engage directly with the Committee or individual members on any of the issues highlighted.

Regards,

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Children in Scotland