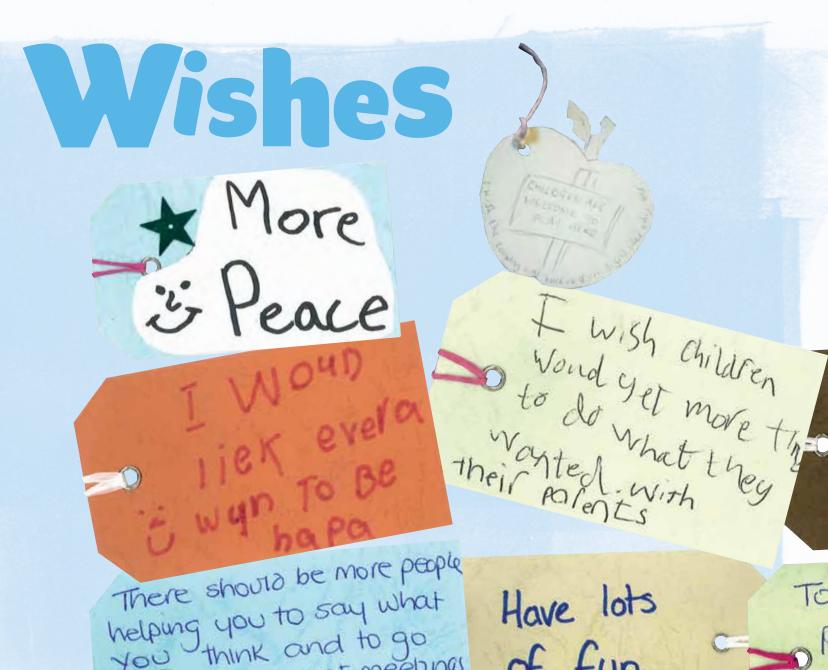


Wishes for Scotland's Children





helping you to say what you think and to go to important meetings that are scary when there are things going on with you and your parents

of fun.

Introduction

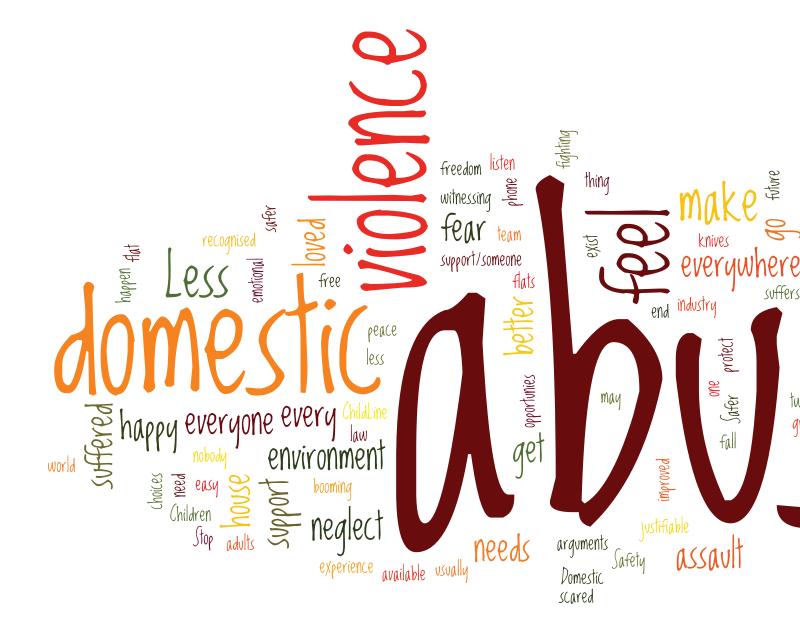
We began as the RSSPCC, a charity set up by people who wanted to protect children in Scotland from abuse and neglect. Over the years, we have tried to make sure we listen to what children, young people, parents, carers and family members tell us about their lives. That information is then used by us to encourage government and politicians to change things, to make a difference to children's lives.

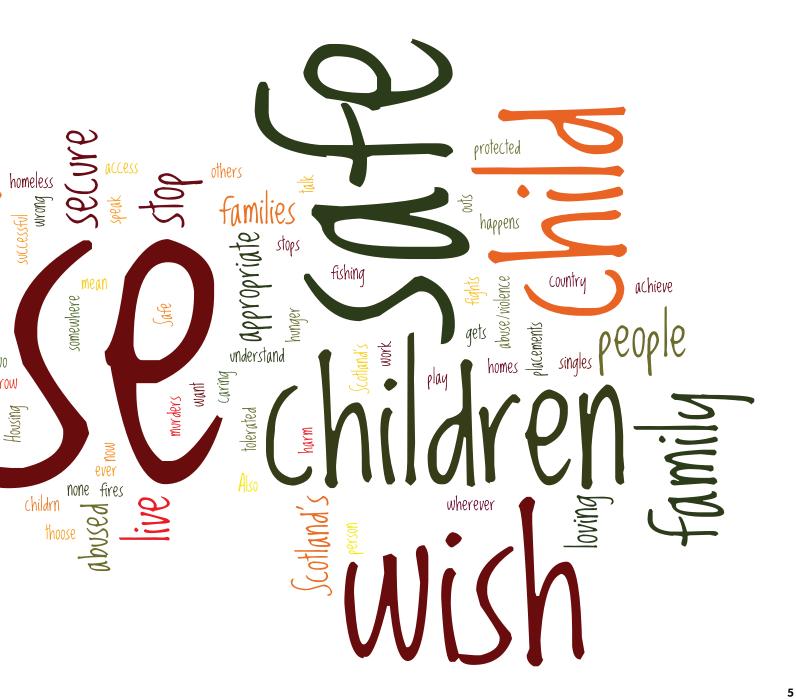
In 2014, to mark our 130th anniversary, we asked the children and young people we support in our services, their parents and carers, and our staff and volunteers, to tell us what they would wish for to make Scotland a better place to live.

Almost 300 people gave us their wishes – some people gave us more than one wish, so there were almost 600 wishes. Some people filled in a questionnaire, others created wish trees, others told the person who supports them at CHILDREN 1ST. You can see a list of all the wishes on our website, www.children1st.org.uk. We have left them as they were written, so there might be some spelling mistakes.

The Scottish Government says it wants Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up. Ministers want to make sure every child in Scotland is safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Almost all the wishes fit into these eight categories so we have used them as headings in our report. We hope that by showing everyone these wishes we can encourage people to think about what more they can do to make Scotland a better place to grow up.









'I wish every child is safe'

57 wishes concerned safety. Children and adults alike wished for a world where there was no violence

Currently in Scotland:

- Research suggests that every year, domestic abuse takes place in more than 50,000 households where children are living
- It is still legal for parents to hit their children
- Police statistics show increased sexual crime in the last year^{iv}

For 223 children we worked with last year, living in a safer environment was a key goal we helped to achieve it for 82% of them.

Abuse and trauma

Some wishes from children and adults were specifically about domestic abuse:

'I wish that domestic abuse would stop, all families are happy'

'Domestic abuse stops and we all live in peace'

'I wish nobody suffers with domestic abuse'

Many people also mentioned the need for support to recover from abuse and trauma, and wished for access to appropriate support services:

'To make sure that children get the support they need when there is domestic abuse in the house'

'I wish that none of Scotland's children had to experience domestic abuse or violence, but for those who had, I wish that they have easy access to support or someone to talk to'

Last year CHILDREN 1ST worked with 559 children, young people, parents and carers in our abuse and trauma recovery services.

The wishes also dealt with prevention; parents in particular were clear that their children should grow up knowing abuse is unacceptable:

'I want my child to understand that abuse is wrong and won't be tolerated'

The importance of adults listening to children was emphasised:

'I wish that children will not be too scared to speak about abuse, and that adults will be there to listen'

Assault

It is still legal in Scotland for parents to hit their children^{vi}, if the court considers the assault 'justifiable'.

Some wishes made it clear that there should be no such thing as justifiable assault; the assault of children should be banned in order to make it clear that harming a child is as unacceptable as harming an adult:

'To be free from fear – there is no such thing as justifiable assault'

'The law to protect children from assault better'

Safety in the community

Safety in the community was another key issue. It was clear from the wishes that a number of children and adults did not feel safe in the area where they lived. Violent crime was a factor, with children mentioning knife crime, fires and murders:

'Stop all the fights and people with knives'

'I wish there is no violence'

One parent felt unsafe following a recent shooting in the local community:

'To live somewhere we can feel safe'







'I wish there were less funerals'

29 wishes were about health. Children and adults shared similar health concerns; many wished for friends and family to get better, others wished for improved health and longer life expectancy across Scotland.

Scotland still experiences marked health inequalities:

- Babies in the poorest areas of Scotland are more than twice as likely to have a very low birth weight compared to those born in the richest areas
- Children in the most deprived areas are still more likely to suffer from tooth decay
- Alcohol related deaths and hospital discharges are six to seven times higher in the poorest areas of Scotlandvii
- Scottish Government figures show that there could be up to 92,000 children living with the harmful effects of parental alcohol misuse and up to 60,000 living with parental drug misuse^{viii}
- Last year increasing numbers of people in Scotland resorted to food banks in order to feed their families^{IX}

Health improvement

Many wishes were about improved health generally:

'Dad get better'

'For children to live in a healthy environment'

'All be healthy and happy'

Drinking and smoking

Many health related wishes were about alcohol misuse and smoking. Children wished for their parents to stop drinking or smoking, and adults wished for our culture to change:

'No drinking, people always get a hangover and fight'

'Alcohol culture needs to change so that children aren't suffering as a result of adults' alcohol misuse'

'For my mum and dad to stop smoking'

Last year we worked with 443 children, young people, parents and carers who had problems with drug and alcohol misuse in the family^x.

Food

Many wishes mentioned food, all of which were about children having enough to eat. The link between poverty and health was very clear:

'Win lottery so there's enough food for my family'

'All children should have proper food put in front of them'

Adults talked about the importance of free school meals:

'Every child in Scotland has access to a fresh, healthy and nutritious lunch at school'

'Free meals at school'

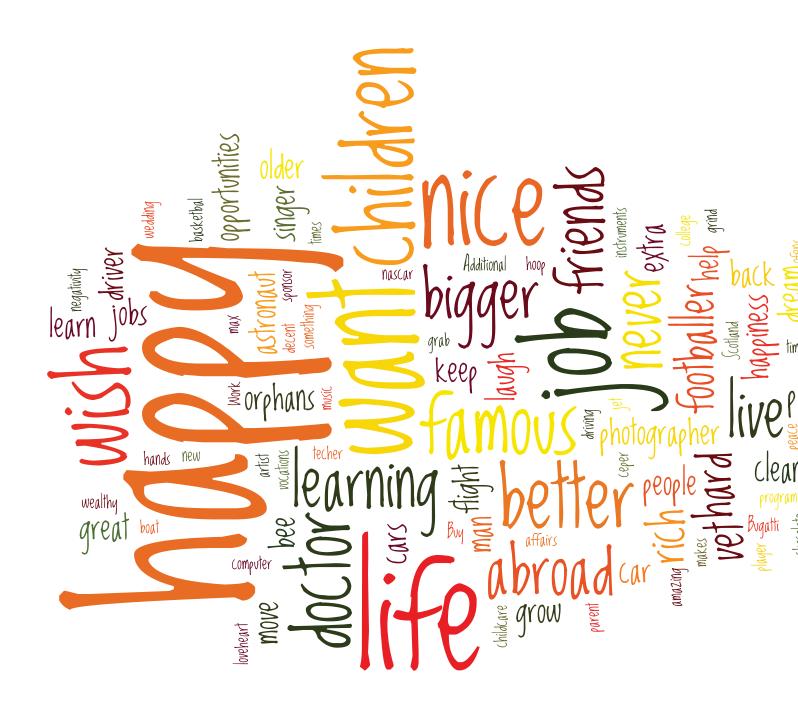
Mental health

Mental health services were also mentioned, mainly around waiting times:

'Better mental health services for children who are suffering as a result of lengthy waiting time for a service or diagnosis'

The need for greater understanding about disability and long term conditions was also mentioned:

'Less poverty and more understanding of all children and adults with a disability or not'







'Opportunities for all children to succeed at something'

118 wishes concerned achievement. The wishes were about happiness, education, employment and wealth.

- 16-24 year olds have the highest unemployment rate of any group in Scotland^{xi}
- Less than half of 16 to 24 year olds (44%) are in full time education^{xii}
- 90% of Scotland's school leavers are in 'positive destinations' nine months after leaving school^{xiii}

Aspirations

The children who gave us their wishes are clearly aspirational. Many wishes were about achieving happiness, and being successful:

'For good stuff to happen and to be happy'

'To move a way from Scogtland and have a decent life. And to settle down at a young age cause am that kind of guy'

'To do well in life'

Although most wishes about achievement talked about it in its widest sense, some were specifically about educational achievement:

'I wnow my tebls' (I know my tables)

'Start concentrating on my exams more and stop worrying about other things'

Adults echoed this, wishing for children to have opportunities to achieve and be successful:

'I wish all children in Scotland can be supported and encouraged to achieve or exceed their potential'

Adults also had aspirations for themselves and their families:

'Just to flourish even when times are hard'

Employment

Many wishes were about employment. Among other things children talked about joining family trades, working in foreign affairs, being nursery nurses, police officers and becoming famous.

'I want to be a train driver, chocolate maker and a spaceman'

'My hope/dream is to become a successful politician'

Children and adults alike said they wanted to work, and wished for more jobs to be available. Older children wanted work to be available for them now. Parents saw paid employment as a positive step for their families:

'I'd like to find work so I can offer my child more opportunities'

'To be able to go back to work'

Money

Children also wished for material things to improve their lives:

'A bigger house'

'Have more money'







Nurtured



'Every child has the right to be loved'

108 wishes were about nurture. These included wishes about love, family relationships, living arrangements, and support for families.

- The relationship between a child and his or her family can have an impact on brain development, emotional wellbeing, relationships with others, and ability to learn^{xiv}
- More than 11,000 of Scotland's children are being formally looked after away from home^{xv}
- As children grow older, the amount of information available about key parenting issues reduces^{xvi}

Love

Love was mentioned by children and adults alike. Many wishes were about children being loved and cared for:

'All children should feel loved'

'That all were loved and cherished from birth'

'Every child has the right to be loved'

Children also wished to find love in the future, and to be with the people they love:

'I hope I will be a dad'

'A true boyfriend, a house, a marriage and a family of my own'

'That our family are all included with each other'

Family relationships

Family relationships were key, with children wishing to get on better with their families:

'That we would have less arguments'

'For my family to stop hating so much'

Adults also wished for positive relationships and stability:

'All children to experience stability'

Children wished to have more time with their families:

'That dad was home more'

Over three quarters (78%) of children, young people and families had improved family relationships after we supported them in 2013.

Children also talked about wanting to live with certain people in their families, and about missing family or friends:

'I wish I could go and stay with my mum and dad'

'To have my grandad back so my gran isn't on her own saddening'

Contact issues were key for children who didn't live with some family members:

'To get to see my brother'

Family support

Adults also talked about the need for support to create positive relationships and stable families:

'I wish that parents had more support generally in difficult times'

'Greater services for children and smaller waiting lists ⊕'

'More social workers'

Last year we worked directly with 1052 children, young people, parents and carers in our Supporting Families services.

Some children and adults talked about how using support services helped them:

'I was scared now I am happy'

There were also wishes about specific supports needed, including support for young carers, fathers, and children in foster care and kinship care.

ParentLine is Scotland's confidential helpline, email and web-chat service, for anyone caring for or concerned about a child. The National Kinship Care service provides training, outreach and a helpline service to improve children's lives through supporting kinship carers. The Family Decision Making service supports separated and separating families to make good decisions for their children as they go through separation or afterwards.

ParentLine, Family Decision Making and National Kinship Care can be accessed through a single helpline number - 08000 28 22 33 - open seven days a week, 365 days a year.







'Make activities cheaper'

77 wishes were about being active. These included wishes about sport and exercise, but the majority of 'active' wishes were about having enough to do.

- In Scotland, it is estimated that low activity contributes to around 2,500 deaths per year and costs the NHS £94 million annually^{xvii}
- 76% Scottish 11-15 year olds watch more than two hours of TV per day, and 77% boys and 37% girls spend an additional two hours a day gaming^{xviii}
- Spending time outside helps children's brains to developxix

Access to activities

Both children and adults wished for more activities locally for children and young people. Other activities and spaces children and adults wished for included better shops, a youth café, skate parks, swimming pools with slides, cinema, clubs and groups, a motivational gym, and places for teenagers to socialise safely:

'More to do for teenagers'

'More youth clubs/ scout placements etc'

Children and adults pointed out that the cost of activities can make them difficult to access, and that this creates inequality:

'Go to activities out of school: when the family has lots of children it's expensive'

'I would love to be able to afford some family activities as some are expensive'

Transport also affects access to activities, and parents were clear about this:

'More activities for babies or pre-school children. And parallel improvement of public transport'

Activities at home

Children also talked about games and activities within the home, emphasising the importance of play:

'Get a bordgame and to play famaliy'

'To make hama beads and loom bands'

Holidays

Children wished to go on holiday with their families:

'Mum and dad to get back together. To go on holiday'

'For all the family to go abroad somewhere'

Parks and green spaces

Many children and adults talked about the need for parks and green spaces:

'Better, safer playparks with shelter to support outdoor play in all weather'

'More outdoor things'

'Outdoor green space for all children to play in'

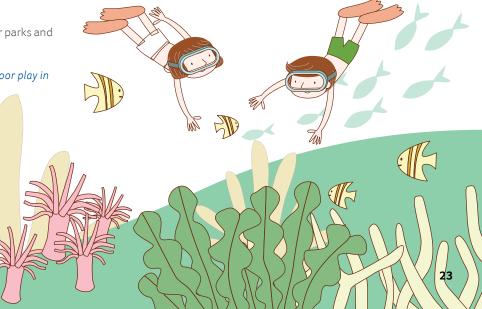
Play

Some adults talked generally about the value of play and wished that play could be seen as a good thing to be welcomed and prioritised:

"Children are welcome to play here". I wish the country was covered in signs like this one."

'To build more play places for young ones and older ones (11 and 12 year olds don't have many places) There is no abuse or violence at home. More things for kids to do that doesn't cost an arm and a leg. Just a happy life for all.'

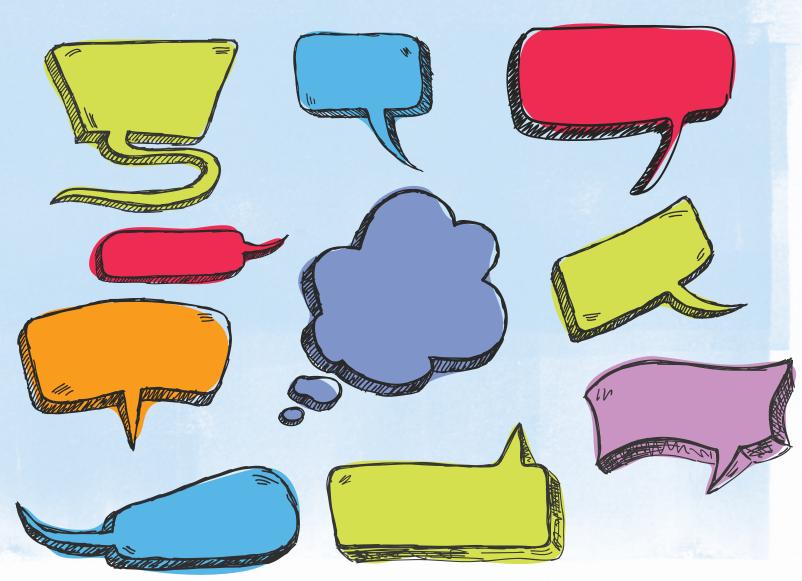
Our national Safeguarding in Sport service provides advice, resources, training and consultancy to any sporting organisations working with children. You can contact us by calling 0141 418 5674 or email safeguardinginsport@children1st.org.uk







Respected



'Children to have a say in their future'

39 wishes were about respect. These included the importance of children being listened to and heard, and the support required in order to make this happen.

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which lists all the rights children have, is still not incorporated into Scots law
- There are currently no national statistics about bullying in Scotland

Listening to children

Many wishes stated that children's views should be listened to and taken seriously. Children wished:

'For the court to listen to younger kids points of views'

'For all children to be heard'

Last year we worked with 250 children to try and ensure that they were more involved in decision making about matters that affect them and succeeded with 88%.

Advocacy

Children were clear that in order to be listened to they would sometimes need support, and they talked about the importance of this advocacy support being available:

'There should be more people helping you to say what you think and helping you to go to important meetings that are scary when there are things going on with you and your parents'

'For services to be available to hear children's voices and to help them'

Children's rights

Adults also talked about children being listened to but also talked about children's rights more generally, and about the need to really put children first:

'UNCRC embedded into Scots law'

'For their views and role in society to be valued and respected'

'Our society's attitude to children - more respect for children as whole human beings, not just mini adults'

'A voice in decision making on things that affect them'

Although the Children and Young People Act** includes a ministerial duty to promote public awareness and understanding of children's rights, these rights are still not systematically embedded in Scotland's governance and public services.

Bullying

Many children wished that bullying did not exist:

'No bullies!'

'I wish in the future that bullyin would stop'







'As I get older I would like the world to be peaceful.'

74 wishes were about responsibility. These included wishes for the world, wishes for the local area, political wishes and wishes about behaviour and personal responsibility.

• 109,533 young people aged 16 and 17 registered to vote in the Scottish referendum

Wishes for the world and the environment

Some wishes were about making the world a better place. Children talked about war, peace and happiness:

'For peace in the world'

'I wish that children be happy'

The environment was another key issue, with children wanting people to take responsibility for looking after the world:

'To be a swimmer. After that to help stop deforestation'

'Help endangered animals in SCOTLAND!'

Wishes for the local area

In the survey we asked children to tell us their wishes for their local area. Lots of these wishes were about wanting things to be cleaner and tidier, and for people to be friendlier, with less arguing:

'To have no rubbish about the town'

'No shouting'

'Not so many arguments'

Political wishes

We were collecting wishes over the lead up to the referendum and several adults and children made reference to the independence debate, showing they were politically engaged:

'Independence - yes Scotland ©'

'I don't want Scotland to be independent as we may become poor'

Behaviour

Children also made wishes about their own behaviour:

'Not to get angry'

'Stop my anger issues and lashing out at my brother'

Of the 150 children supported by our befriending projects last year, 82% experienced improved emotional health.

Adults, too, talked about behaviour and understanding the reasons for it:

'I want to understand what my child is feeling'

'For my child to behave'

Adults taking responsibility

Adults talked about the importance of being responsible for children:

'All adults to recognise their and take responsibility for all children'

'For more parents to be a better example for their children'

We worked with 241 families last year to improve their parenting skills, and over three quarters showed improvement by the time our work with them ended.





Included



'For all children to have a place they belong and a way of belonging'

88 wishes were about being included. These covered wishes about poverty and social exclusion, access to education and services, and employment and childcare.

- 21% of Scotland's children are living in poverty^{xxi}
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act increased entitlement to early learning and childcare provision for three year olds and some two year olds. The Act does not mention childcare provision for older children
- Children who have additional support needs are six times more likely then other children to be excluded from school.
- Children living in the poorest areas of Scotland are six times more likely to be excluded from school than those living in the richest areas^{xxii}
- Children living in the poorest areas of Scotland are likelier to leave school with fewer qualifications than those living in the richest areas

Belonging

Belonging was a key theme in the wishes. Adults talked about this in terms of community and inclusion, while children talked about friendship and family:

'More community integration so everyone can help each other'

'Teenagers to be nicer to each other'

People also wished for greater equality in Scotland.

Poverty and social exclusion

At CHILDREN 1ST we have, like many other third sector organisations, had to change and adapt to the financial climate. Much of our work in local communities now includes helping families manage their budgets to maximise money ensuring the essentials like food, clothing and housing costs are covered. This was reflected in the wishes we received, as lots of children and adults talked about poverty:

'To stop poverty'

'End child poverty'

'A culture that prioritises family rather than the economy - the gap between rich and poor to be reduced'

The wishes also showed links between poverty and social exclusion, with children and adults alike talking about the things they were unable to do because of a lack of money:

'We had time and moany to go abrod'

Parents also wished for public transport to be improved to make it easier to access activities and services.

Many of the families we work with are experiencing homelessness or housing problems. This was reflected in the wishes, with children and adults wishing for better housing and more space:

'All children would have enough living space indoors and outdoors'

Access to education and services

A number of children as well as adults wished for greater equality in education:

'All children have the right to go to school'

'For equality in schools and not feel judged'

'Reduce health and education inequalities related to income and for local councils to spend money more carefully and wisely'

'Best education available for all'

There were a lot of wishes about support services (see 'nurtured'). Children and adults also wished for easier access to these services, including shorter waiting lists, so they could access services when they needed them, and also better transport to enable them to use existing services:

'Better roads'

'Equality and ease of access to services'

Employment and childcare

'Better early years provision'

Many parents' wishes were about being able to work (see 'achieving'). Some specifically mentioned the barriers to working, many of which were about a lack of good quality, affordable childcare:

'Reduced costs of quality childcare to allow parents to return to work'

'More access to free childcare for all'

'I wish I have a flying pony'

Fun wishes

There were around 25 wishes that didn't fall under these headings, many of which were about the Scottish weather. Others showed the impressive imagination of the children we work with:

'I want to play in the big tall trees and get chased by a shark and a polar bear!'

25



Call to action from Alison Todd, Chief Executive, CHILDREN 1ST

The RSSPCC was founded 130 years ago because individuals and communities believed more could be done to protect Scotland's children. Today, as CHILDREN 1ST, we still believe it's everyone's responsibility to keep children safe and we work with communities across Scotland supporting them to put CHILDREN 1ST.

When I first saw the wishes made by children, young people and their families I felt saddened, then, in turn, angry, and finally determined.

Saddened because how can Scotland claim to be the best place in the world to grow up when children have to wish to play a board game, or visit the park, or to be safe from violence? Angry, because in 21st century Scotland no child should have to wish they will win the lottery so they can buy food for their families. And finally the wishes made me feel determined, because they serve as a reminder that Scotland's children still need us.

The children who contributed to this report are clearly aspirational. They wish to be doctors, politicians, builders, mothers, fathers. They also wish to help the world to be a better place; they wish for world peace, better health outcomes, a fairer society. If we truly want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up, we too need to be aspirational. We need to ask ourselves some difficult questions, and be prepared for some honest answers.





I WISH...

To find out more about this report or Wishes for Scotland's Children, please contact the CHILDREN 1ST policy team policy@children1st.org.uk or 0131 446 2300



i http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/ background/wellbeing

- ii Based on the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2012/13 Partner Abuse report: http:// www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00455441.pdf
- iii http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/statistics/browse/crime-justice
- iv http://www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/statistics/browse/crime-justice
- v CHILDREN 1st IIMS data (outcomes summary) 2013/14
- vi Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003
- vii http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/health/2012/nr_121213_health_
- inequalities.pdf
- viii Scottish Government Business Regulatory Impact Assessment on alcohol minimum pricing, October 2012
- ix http://www.trusselltrust.org/stats
- x CHILDREN 1ST IIMS data (research flags) 2013/14
- xi http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0046/00461485.pdf
- xii http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0046/00461485.pdf
- xiii http://scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/TrendDestinations

- xiv http://www.wavetrust.org/sites/default/files/reports/conception_to_age_2_-_the_ age_of_opportunity_-_web_optimised.pdf
- xv http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/03/8922/2
- xvi http://www.children1st.org.uk/media/222293/
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- xviii http://www.activehealthykidsscotland.co.uk/files/2013/10/Long-e-Formelectroni cversionScotland2013.pdf
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- xx http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents
- xxi CPAG, Poverty in Scotland, 2011
- xxii http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/4199/21
- xxiii http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/ TrendTariffScores

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