

NEWSLETTER



Scottish Child Law Centre

Summer 2024



Access to Justice Round Table

We believe that access to justice is a crucial avenue to realising children's rights. It's a national issue which requires a system change and that takes time. To help children and families access justice now, we're hosting a small Round Table with key partners on 25th June to explore collaborative and practical action. Watch our social media for outcomes and opportunities to get involved.

A Summer Welcome

Welcome to the Scottish Child Law Centre's first quarterly newsletter. As many of you know, we're a specialist hub protecting children's rights through free legal advice, specialist training and partnership work to influence long term change for children. A big warm welcome to our old and new friends!

Free Legal Advice

Demand for free legal advice continues to increase. We help thousands each year and in one recent month alone, requests for advice doubled. The complexity of cases highlight how many children and families are struggling with the cost of living and barriers to justice. This includes limited understanding about their rights, challenges navigating a complex system and a lack of legal aid solicitors.

Our Team



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Free Legal Advice Specialist Training Long Term Change

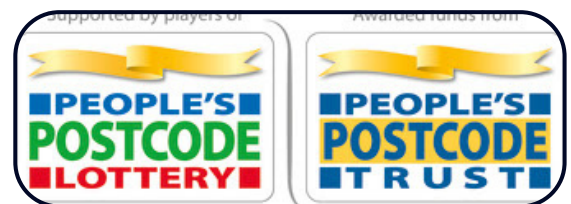


Community Clinics Removing Barriers

Our engagement team drop into local spaces in Govanhill and Fife and work with local people and our partners to co-design in person community advice clinics. Last year's Govanhill pilot clinic identified multiple breaches of children's rights, particularly in the Black and ethnic minority community. Our Fife partners asked for help given the barriers to justice they identified for their children and families. We hope the clinics will be coupled with specialist training and that funding will soon make them possible.

Specialist Training

This year, we successfully re-launched our Masterclasses which cover important children's rights topics. Our bespoke training continues, helping to upskill the professionals advocating for children's rights, and our CPD training is verified by the Law Society. Our senior solicitor regularly presents to organisations, most recently The Fostering Network.



Funding News!

We were delighted to receive funding from the People's Postcode Trust and that they recognised the vital role of access to justice in realising children's rights. This funding will help reach more children and families with free advice about how the law supports their them.



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All ages of children and all areas of child related Scots law



Young Investigators The Law & My Life

We've established a National Investigation Group to mark UNCRC law. A diversity of young people, from Govanhill to Tweeddale and across Scotland, meet online to discuss how the law supports their rights in different life situations and to shape our services so that we reach more children and young people. We'll keep you up-to-date with their work.

We're also developing a new schools package on this theme and discussions are underway about a possible Autumn pilot.

Become a Member

We recently refreshed our membership benefits. These now include invites to free members only training sessions, a quarterly newsletter on the Centre's work and opportunities for members, and invites to 6 monthly collaborative round tables on key issues. We have a fantastic and diverse membership and are always delighted to welcome more on board.

Volunteers Week

Volunteers Week provided us with the opportunity to thank all of our amazing volunteer solicitors. This included our newest recruits, Catherine Paterson and Ziqyia Riaz and our longest serving volunteer, Clair Cranston. If you're a child or family law solicitor or experienced in a related area, we'd love to hear from you!



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Protecting children's rights through access to justice

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

ONE FAMILY'S STORY

1 ACCESS
A homeless family arrived at our free community advice clinic. The three children had been sleeping in a borrowed car with their parents and a local service referred them to us.

2 LISTEN
With the support of an interpreter, our solicitors listened to their story. The family had been continually told by the Council that they did not have the right to emergency accommodation and support from children's services was denied.

3 ADVICE
Our solicitors learned that the family had all the paperwork and therefore the right to live and work in the UK and to receive public support. They were advised on how the law supported the rights of their children and family.

4 OUTCOME
The family had no funds for private legal support. Through follow-up partnership work, a law firm agreed to urgently represent the family and they secured temporary accommodation.

5 INFLUENCE
To ensure learning and better support for other children and families, we raised the incorrect handling of the case with the Children's Commissioner, the Council and others.

Our specialist hub provides free legal advice via our website and we're planning more community clinics.

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Law Update

Access to justice is embedded into the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which becomes law in Scotland in July.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child found that far too many children are not able to access justice and remedy when their rights are violated and they are now consulting to ensure greater accountability from member states.

This means that all levels of government, including local authorities, and civil society have a duty to have pathways to justice and effective remedies in place to protect children's rights.

