



Children and Young People's
Centre for Justice



STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2028

Collaborating for Rights-Respecting Justice



Foreword

Professor Fiona Dyer, Director



I am delighted to share with you the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) three-year strategic plan. Taking account of the views of children, young people and wider stakeholders, we wanted to make our new plan focused and realistic on what we can achieve, whilst staying true to our aspirations. The plan also outlines what we will support our partners to achieve over the next three years, whilst ensuring we keep children and young people at the centre of all we do. We cannot do this alone, to achieve real change we need to work collectively at all levels of the care and justice systems.

Our plan is written with wider recognition of the recent and future changes expected within the care and justice sector with exciting new pieces of legislation and policy. This includes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, alongside the ambitions of the Promise, that sets clear goals by 2030, and the Scottish Government's Rights-Respecting Vision and Action Plan, that will collectively make a real difference to the lives of children, young people and their families.

Our plan also takes account of wider issues in Scotland and further afield. There is real pressure on the workforce, a lack of resources and we are living amidst a cost-of-living crisis. This is putting additional pressure on families, and in turn communities, with issues being highlighted including antisocial behaviour, exploitation and a growing concern in relation to violence.



Within this context CYCJ has an important role to influence leadership at a national level whilst supporting the workforce and the children, young people and families we work with to develop and uphold children's rights to achieve change.

The impact and outcomes of our work will be measured annually through our workplan and reported within our annual report.

I would like to thank the children, young people and stakeholders who shared their views with us in relation to our work and what our priorities should be, and the CYCJ team in turning these into a reality. I am really looking forward to the next three years and what we can achieve.

Our plan identifies 3 strategic priorities:

System change

We work to influence care and justice systems, national policy and legislation to ensure that they are rights-respecting, participatory and accountable; focusing on prevention, the development of strengths and resilience, and recovery from harm.

Community

We promote the importance of responding to children and young people in conflict with the law with compassion, supported by and included within their own communities.

The adults around the child / young person

We support families and professionals to develop the values, knowledge and skills required to align with international best practice.



What we are and what we do

CYCJ is primarily funded by the Scottish Government and based in the University of Strathclyde. We work towards ensuring that Scotland's approach to children and young people in conflict with the law is rights-respecting, contributing to better outcomes for our children, young people and communities.

Integrating three core workstreams – Research, Practice and Policy Development, and Participation and Engagement – under a unified approach, allows CYCJ to advocate for a youth justice framework rooted in evidence-based practices, respect for rights, and inclusivity.

The work of CYCJ is supported by our Executive Governance Group (EGG). The EGG, which is chaired by Professor Sandy Cameron CBE, provides strategic leadership to CYCJ and partners in their mission to ensure youth and criminal justice practice, policy and research is informed by the best possible knowledge.

EGG Members represent a wide range of organisations, community interest groups, authorities and academic institutions, including the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), Chief Social Work Officers, and third sector partners.

We are also supported by our Associates Scheme, where CYCJ Associates act as our 'champions'. Their hard work enables CYCJ to make a greater impact through the widening of expertise and knowledge, the development of strong partnerships, and gaining increased recognition of our work and the key issues we are addressing.



Introduction

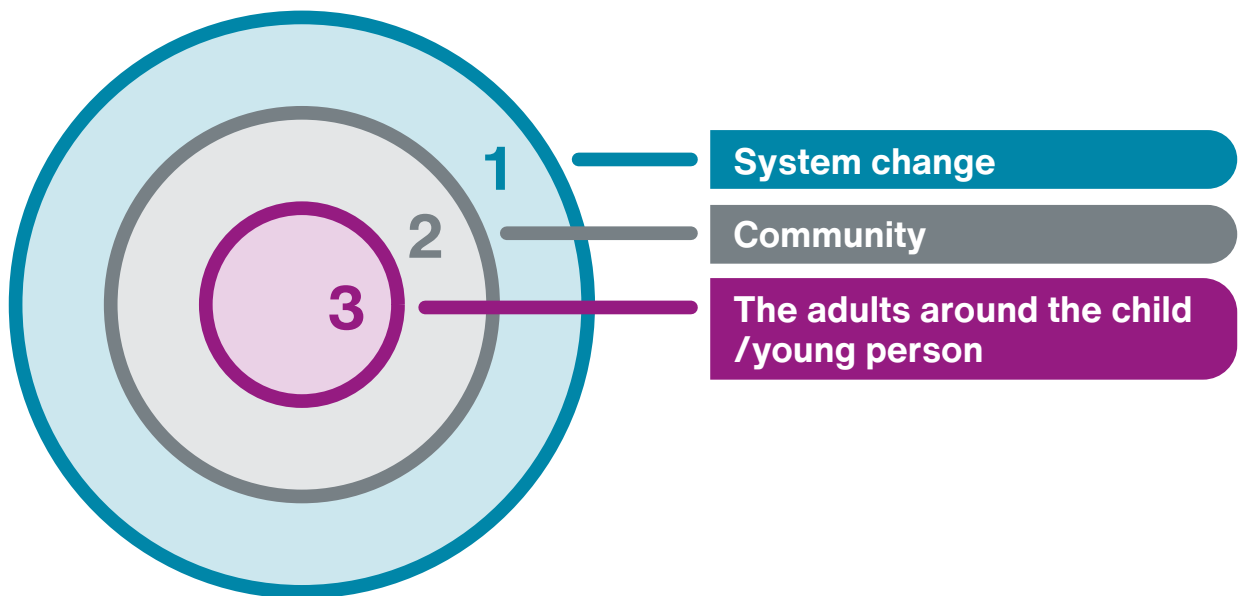
Professor Sandy Cameron CBE, Chair of EGG

Over the years to date CYCJ has played a leading role in ensuring that the rights of children and young people in conflict with the law are properly respected, practice is improved and research has built better knowledge and understanding. Whilst much has been achieved there remains much to do and this strategic plan sets out how CYCJ will continue to take forward its Vision and Mission over the next three years. CYCJ has established a reputation for high quality work and fearless promotion of children and young people's best interests in what are often challenging circumstances.

The EGG is fully committed to supporting this important work which looks to put Scotland at the forefront of developing innovative and effective practice and policy. CYCJ will, through this strategy, continue to be respected nationally and internationally as a highly influential centre of excellence in the field of justice for children and young people. I commend the strategy to all stakeholders as a commitment which merits their support to ensure that Scotland's children and young people benefit from its outcomes.



Strategic Priorities



Vision statement



CYCJ works towards ensuring that Scotland’s approach to children and young people is rights-respecting, contributing to safer communities and better outcomes for our children, young people and families.



Mission Statement

We produce internationally ground-breaking work, bringing together children and young people's contributions, research evidence, practice wisdom and system know-how to operate as a leader for child and youth justice thinking in Scotland and beyond.



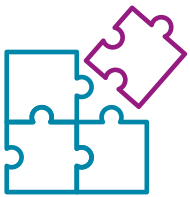
CYCJ Values

Respect: we benefit from a range of expertise, internally and externally, valuing and respecting lived and learned experience.

Bold: open to new ideas and cutting-edge thinking, we push boundaries to help progress transformative change for children and young people in conflict with the law, their families and their communities.

Child and youth centred: the needs, rights and wellbeing of children and young people are central to our decision making, striving to be led by their voices.

Dedicated: we believe change is possible and are committed to achieving a rights respecting, child and young person friendly justice system.



CY CJ 'How' statements

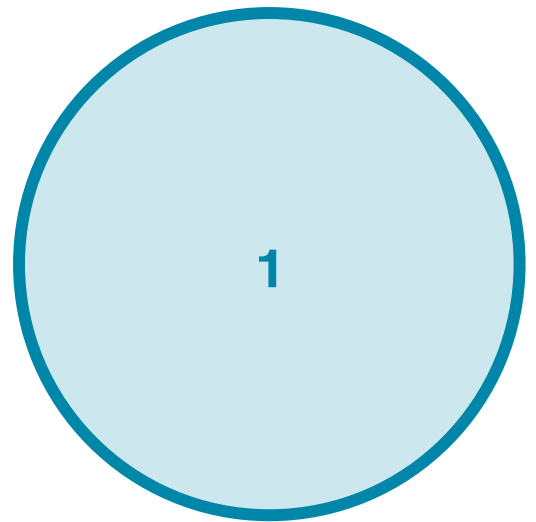
Participatory: we ensure the participation of all key stakeholders - children, young people, families and professionals - in our work, facilitating spaces for individual and collective dialogue.

Evidence-based: our decision-making is informed by clear, robust research, alongside the collective knowledge and expertise of children, young people, families and professionals.

Influencing: we help to influence law, policy, practice and attitudinal change by providing accessible spaces and resources to enable all stakeholders to develop their learning, knowledge and advance their practice.

Agile: we use evidence and foster positive relationships to anticipate change, ensuring we are prepared to proactively predict and address unintended consequences.

Inclusive: we value diversity and work hard to break down barriers, ensuring everyone is treated fairly and with respect.



Strategic Priorities

Strategic priority 1 – System change

We work to influence care and justice systems and national policy and legislation to ensure that they are rights-respecting, participatory and accountable; focusing on prevention, the development of strengths and resilience, and recovery from harm.

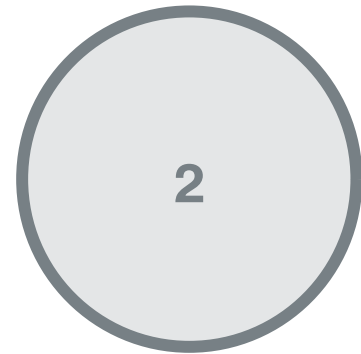
We will do this by:

Ensuring that all children are treated as children within a system which upholds their rights in accordance with UNCRC and in keeping with the principles of Kilbrandon.

Ensuring young people aged 18-26 in conflict with the law are supported within a system that upholds their rights and understands their needs as distinct from adults.

Contributing to system change to ensure victims and witnesses are treated with respect, supported to recover and have their rights upheld.

Supporting all children and young people to access justice and hold systems accountable when their rights are not upheld.



Strategic Priority 2 – Community

We promote the importance of responding to children and young people in conflict with the law with compassion, supported by and included within their own communities.

We will do this by:

Challenging the stigma experienced by and influence the language used in relation to children and young people in conflict with the law, to ensure rights are upheld.

Improving the understanding of why a child or young person may cause harm, as a foundation for a rights-respecting, compassionate response.

Creating an evidence base which demonstrates the importance of a community-based approach to supporting children and young people in conflict with the law.



3

Strategic priority 3 – The adults around the child / young person

We support families and professionals to develop the values, knowledge and skills required to align with international best practice.

We will do this by:

Creating space to learn from families, parents and carers ensuring we are able to advocate for their needs to be met, ensuring they feel able to support their children and young people within their community.

Leading on the delivery of learning and development opportunities for professionals, providing spaces to help ensure they are confident and highly skilled enabling them to meet the needs and respond to the actions of children and young people.

Advocating on behalf of the workforce around children and young people in conflict with the law to help ensure they are adequately resourced, supported, and their role understood by decision makers.

Influencing and supporting leaders in the delivery of a system that invites reflection, supporting services to capture robust evidence and engage in learning about how to improve practice for children and young people.



Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028

cycj.org.uk

cycj@strath.ac.uk

