

CYCJ Satellite event

5th World Congress on Justice with Children

June 11, 2025



Overview

- At Scotland's National Youth Justice Conference in June 2025, the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) hosted a satellite event for the fifth World Congress on Justice with Children.
- 30 leading policy and practitioners in Scotland came together for a detailed discussion on child-centred justice and preventing and responding to violence affecting children in justice systems.
- A panel discussion, followed by questions and comments from the audience, raised a number of key themes including the importance of healing and restorative justice.

Panel

- Cheryl Clark, Procurator Fiscal Depute, Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service.
- Sinclair Soutar, Chief Operating Officer, Kibble Education and Care Centre.
- Professor Fiona Dyer, Director, CYCJ.
- Pamela Morrison, Practice Development Advisor, CYCJ.

Meeting summary

Fiona began CYCJ's satellite event by setting the scene of the fifth World Congress on Justice with Children, sharing her and Pamela's experience in Madrid, including delivering a workshop.

Participants then watched two powerful speeches from the World Congress to help shape the discussion around child-centred justice and violence affecting children within justice systems. First of all the speech from Melodie was shown, speaking of her personal experience as a child witness in a justice process. This was then followed by Sheema Sen Gupta, Child Protection Director, UNICEF who talked of the progress made in recent years on reimagining justice.

In response to the speeches, the Panel reflected on:

- Melodie's bravery and the importance of hearing her story;
- The need for young people to have the space and power to shape justice systems;
- The ripple effects of harm across friends, family and community;
- The power of restorative justice and having justice systems which heal;

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- The trauma of putting children through adult justice systems.

The panel then reflected on how this applies to the context in Scotland:

- Scotland's system has made improvements in recent years and some of the hurdles faced by Melodie should not happen here, but there are clearly areas where practice in Scotland could be more trauma-informed.
- There needs to be a greater focus on restorative justice in Scotland, and ways to extend the Bairns' Hoose (Barnahus) type model out to children who have been in conflict with the law.
- Alongside this, there are issues in Scotland around resourcing and how to invest in and upskill the workforce.



The meeting was then opened up to questions and comments from the floor:

- Melodie's story highlighted the strong need for restorative justice, but there is a challenge to get wider community support for this. Education was identified as really important for this; as well as ways for Melodie's speech to reach a wider audience to build community confidence.
- Recent tragic incidents of knife crime have shown the need for greater support for children and young people in dealing with conflict resolution.
- It is difficult for the prosecutor to get across to the public the need to balance the severity of a crime with the need to support and rehabilitate the child/ young person in conflict with the law.
- There is a strong media narrative in Scotland that all victims want is a strong prison sentence for children who have committed serious harm but in reality many child victims are looking for greater therapeutic support and more information, alongside a better outcome so there is no chance of the harm happening again.

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