



Childhood Policy Programme: Children's Rights Policy Lab

How can children's rights be embedded within policy and policymaking across the four parts of the UK?

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Background and context

British Academy Policy Labs bring together senior-level stakeholders from within the policy ecosystem to actively engage with the relevant available evidence and insight on a specific policy issue and work together to come up with practical, policy-focused solutions, informed by input from across the humanities and social sciences.

The Children's Rights Policy Lab, building on findings from the Childhood Policy Programme, explored tensions and challenges in the area of children's rights and aimed to build some degree of consensus on potential ways forward which will be of value to policymakers across the UK. The Policy Lab brought together 15-20 senior individuals with extensive expertise in children's rights, representing a range of perspectives.

Over the course of three sessions (on the 16th, 23rd and 29th November 2021) the lab explored a series of connected questions:

1. Current and possible approaches to embedding children's rights in policymaking
2. What needs to change for children's rights to be embedded in policy across the four nations of the UK
3. Strategies for change and influencing stakeholders

Before each session, there was also a parallel workshop held with children and young people, facilitated by the Participation People, exploring a complementary set of questions. Insights from these conversations with children was fed into each subsequent lab session.

The purpose of this report is to document the Children's Rights Policy Lab process, and the detail of discussions that took place in each workshop. There is a separate report which presents a draft framework for moving forward, based on those discussions. The structure of this report is as follows:

- List of lab participants
- Overview of lab format and process
- Summary of each session – agenda/ key questions and discussion

Lab participants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>
Professor David Archard	Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Queen's University Belfast
Dr Jocelyn Bailey (facilitator)	Post Doctoral Research Fellow at the Social Design Institute of the University of Arts London
Nicola Berkley	Senior Policy Adviser, The British Academy
Claudia Devlin	Senior Policy Analyst, Office of the Children's Commissioner for England
Antonia Dixey	Chief Executive, Participation People
Professor Ruth Gilbert	Director, Children and Families Policy Research Unit, National Institute for Health Research
Professor Simon Hoffman	Coordinator, Observatory on Human Rights of Children, Swansea University
Sally Holland	Children's Commissioner for Wales
Professor Kathryn Hollingsworth	Professor of Law, Newcastle University
Paddy Kelly	Director, Children's Law Centre
Louise King	Director, Children's Rights Alliance for England
Professor Stuart Logan	Director of the NIHR Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care South West Peninsula (PenCLAHRC), National ARC lead for research on children
Professor Laura Lundy	Co-Director of the Centre for Children's Rights, Queen's University Belfast
Dr Molly Morgan Jones	Director of Policy, The British Academy
Dragan Nastic	Strategic Lead – UNCRC, UNICEF
Mariela Neagu	Independent Researcher; former Minister for child welfare in Romania
Professor Aoife Nolan	Professor of International Human Rights Law, University of Nottingham
Sean O'Neill	Policy Director, Children in Wales
Sara Ogilvie	Director of Policy, Rights and Advocacy, Child Poverty Action Group
Shelby Roberts	Policy Adviser, The British Academy
Professor Kay Tisdall	Chair of Childhood Policy, University of Edinburgh
Dr Adam Wright	Head of Public Policy, The British Academy

Overview of Lab format and process

Policy Labs are intended to be an open, non-hierarchical, and collaborative space for exploration and development of new ideas. The sessions were held online (using Zoom), and conducted entirely as a group conversation (no breakout groups). To aid transparency and co-creation, visuals were shared, and notes captured from the discussions, using an online whiteboard called Miro. Participants were invited to engage with the Miro board during and after the session: the board remained open throughout the Policy Lab, with all three documented in the same place, so that participants could see how the conversation developed, or add comments and thoughts outside of the sessions.

- British Academy Children's Rights Policy Lab board:
https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_lkLDgB4=?invite_link_id=361850673724
- Participation People/ Young Policy Advisors' board:
https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_lkbW1nk=?invite_link_id=241403912592

The overall structure and flow of the Policy Lab was as follows:



Figure 1 Children's Rights Policy Lab - overview of process

Detail of each lab session

Young Policy Advisors and Participation People, session 1

Participation People engaged a group 15 young people, aged between 13-17. Diverse group in terms of geography, SEN, and education.

Aims of the session

The first session aimed to open up the conversation around children's rights, and to support conversation in future sessions about what the importance and value of embedding CR in policy might be, by exploring first what 'policy' and 'rights' meant to the young people involved.

Key questions addressed

- What rights do you have?
- What does policy mean to you?
- What policies affect you and your peers?
- What's the predictable future if young people do/ don't influence policy in:
 - Health?
 - Education?
 - Youth Justice?
 - Other policies?

Participants were also invited to construct short user stories using the format: "As a young person who is.... I need.... So that...."

Summary of discussion

Key points were:

- When thinking about policy and rights young people think about the services and areas they interact with day to day (schools, social media, gaming)
- Covid 19 did not feature much in the discussion
- The perception is that policy is done to, not with, young people
- Desire for policy to be co-created with young people
- Young people had higher trust in local institutions and policymakers, as compared to regional or national ones. Distrust of national politicians

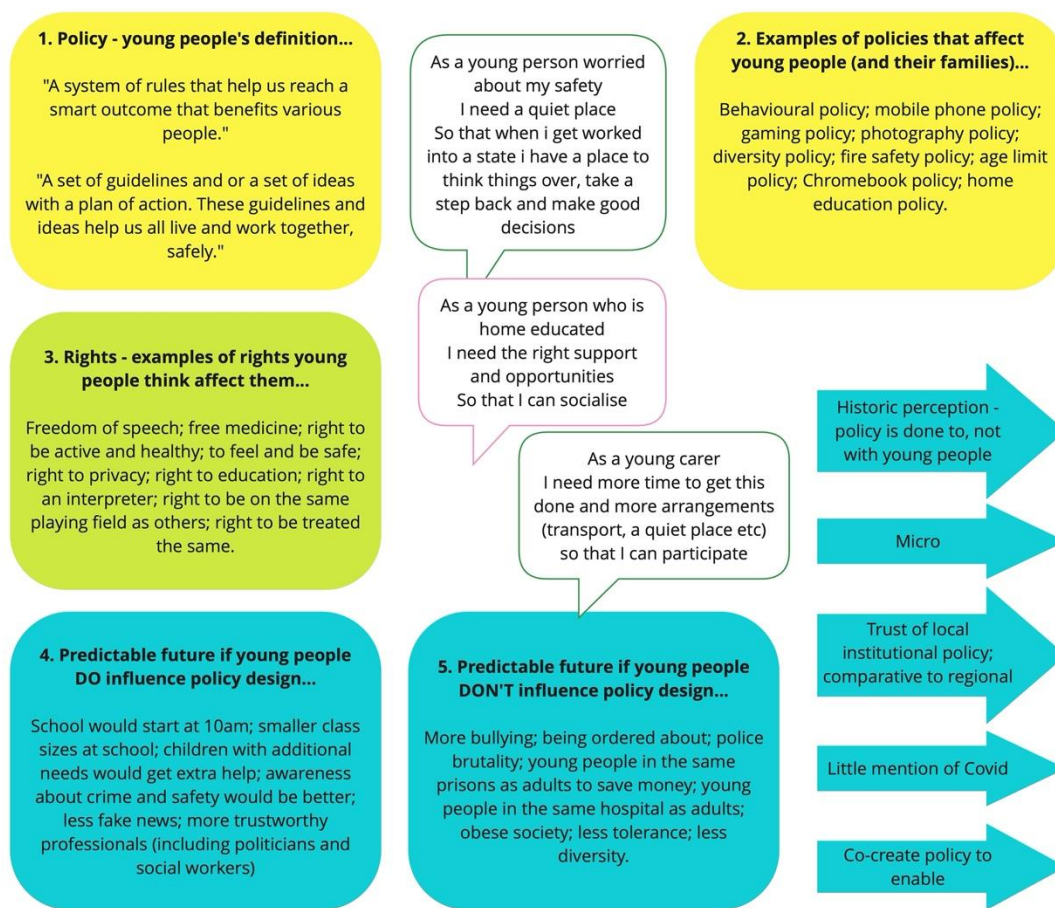


Figure 2 Visual summary of discussions captured on Miro

Children's Rights Policy Lab, session 1

Aims of the session

The aim of the first session was to surface and critically discuss possible models and approaches for embedding children's rights in policymaking, as a pre-cursor to discussing, in future sessions, a suitable approach for the UK specifically.

Key questions addressed

- What are the possible models, factors or mechanisms (real or hypothetical) for embedding children's rights into policymaking?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these factors/mechanisms?
- How far away are we from a coherent rights-based approach across the UK as a whole?
- What are the main barriers to progress?

Summary of discussion 1: Reviewing possible factors and mechanisms

Points made in this discussion comprised:

- There is no one-size-fits-all model for embedding children's rights, and each country must find its own way. There are already different competing models within the UK. It is not

helpful that Westminster is not strongly putting forward children's rights while some devolved administrations are. There is also confusion when Westminster refers to 'children in the UK' when 'children in England' would be more accurate.

- There is a need to think more strategically about implementation of policy on children's rights. In Scotland, there is quite good legislation on children's rights, but implementation could be improved.
- Legal frameworks need to be reinforced by structures and mechanisms that ensure accountability. There should be a framework with mechanisms and methods for monitoring and ensuring compliance with children's rights.
- Using research and evidence to show that complying with children's rights is better for all is important - e.g., the use evidence on smacking. Different audiences will respond to different types of evidence or argument. Reliable, accessible and disaggregated data on children is needed for policy making and implementation, and for accountability and compliance. Case studies and stories/narratives can also be important tools for engaging with and persuading audiences that respond to affective arguments.
- The general structure and mechanics of government tend to make children invisible in decision-making. Children's rights can often fall between the gaps because there is no dedicated space for it. Perhaps the most obvious step to improve visibility would be to have a minister/ portfolio focused on children's rights.
- Using human rights as the basis for framing a children's rights approach has limitations, and sometimes children's rights can get subsumed within human rights.
- Training for policymakers and other professionals in the policy ecosystem can play an important role. Tailored child rights training for civil servants at all levels as part of mandatory professional requirements could help bring thinking on children's rights into the policy process. Equality impact assessments are another useful tool in policymaking because they force organisations to get into the habit of considering rights.
- The current devolution settlement puts limits on the ability of devolved administrations to champion children's rights, such as the limits to the legal incorporation of children's rights (in Wales)
- Rights advocates must consider the political reality and the existing contestation over the language of rights. A rights approach may not be helpful in all circumstances. In some political contexts, the language of rights can be a hindrance rather than a help and a more pragmatic, *ad hoc* approach could prove more effective.
- The political context is hugely important but ultimately the civil service (national, regional, local) is a hugely important focus if we want children's rights to matter in the design and implementation of policy. There are opportunities there and they should be key targets in terms of persuading/training re child rights and policymaking.
- A vocal and unified children's rights sector is vital. Having an active and informed third sector, community leaders and external voices, alongside a receptive government open to conversation, discussion and willingness to learn is important. It is also important to create spaces in which these actors can come together to talk about children's rights, discuss what works and find ways forward. Children and young people's voices must also be central to these spaces, where they can meet face-to-face with policymakers and practitioners to change attitudes and behaviours.



Figure 3 Visual summary of discussion 1 from Miro board

Summary of discussion 2: Distance to travel and barriers to progress

- Systems-level approaches are useful but capitalising on ad hoc opportunities to bring in a rights approach can also be productive in influencing on specific policies and issues.
- There is a growing divergence of approaches to children's rights across the UK. It is unclear if there is a desire to embed rights across the board in a more coherent way.
- Children can feel forgotten about: for instance, secondary school age children in England during Covid lockdowns. This can allow young people to form a negative view of politics/rights. This contrasts with other countries that put children more front and centre.
- Political champions are crucial: having charismatic champions for children's rights can make a big difference.
- There needs to be bipartisan commitment beyond the electoral cycle. Embedded systems which de-politicise children's rights and ensure a long-term commitment and strategy will be hard to build without greater political consensus.
- There is a need to think not only of language of children's rights but 'children' per se; in some policy contexts (e.g., immigration, YJS), even the language of 'child' is missing (instead 'offender under 18' is still persistently used). This is demonstrative of the distance to travel on rights if we can't even use the language of 'child'.
- Ensure the child is seen holistically, with the impact of policies on all aspects of child's life recognised (e.g., a child might be in both immigration and care systems but is treated in a siloed way). Joining up policy areas is difficult and will require fundamental changes to the way in which some departments work.

Young Policy Advisors and Participation People, session 2

Aims of the session

The second session with young people aimed to understand more about their specific positions on policies/ politics, and then to invite them to define a set of principles for making good policy for children and young people. It also introduced them to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Key questions addressed

- Sliding scale responses to a set of statements relating to policies in health, education, justice, and miscellaneous
- What are the key ingredients to a good policy for children and young people?
- Which ingredients do we need to focus on, to make sure we get policy right/ baked correctly?
- What else do we need to do to perfect this policy?

Summary of discussion

The sliding scale activities identified some diversity among the group in terms of their position on a political spectrum.

The 'ingredients' for a good policy for children and young people were:

- It has to be agreeable - people won't riot as a result of it.
- Have to talk to young people/ come to an agreement
- It has to be reliable - stable, can't cause things to go bad/ standards dropping; standards increase.
- It shouldn't give government any more control.
- It should make people's lives better.
- Promotes equality; doesn't discriminate / isolate any community or group.
- It doesn't infringe on our basic rights/ disrupt.
- Privacy and personal agreements should be considered.
- Young people should be involved in policy design, delivery and evaluation.
- Have reason
- It should be adaptable - and open to review, regularly.
- It should be informed by hindsight with thoughts about the future that inform policy design and review.
- Consider the use of technology with policy design and implementation.
- It should be youth proofed with clear plain language.

The 'cooking instructions' for perfecting a policy were:

1. Be taken seriously by people who are promoting and enacting the policy
2. It should be youth proofed
3. And cooked at the right temperature/ fair degrees
4. It should have appropriate measures in place to make sure it's not broken
5. Diverse people should be involved in its design, delivery and evaluation
6. Some things need to be discussed more than others

Children's Rights Policy Lab, session 2

Aims of the session

Building on discussions in the first Policy Lab about possible mechanisms, the second session on 23 November aimed to explore potential principles that would underpin a successful embedding of children's rights within policy and policymaking across the four parts of the UK, and will define a possible model embodying these principles.

Key questions addressed

- What principles would underpin a successful embedding of children's rights within policy and policymaking across the four parts of the UK? Aspects participants might like to consider include:
 - What would the 'design parameters' be to create a rights-based approach that has a positive impact on children? What principles should the development and delivery of any model follow?
 - What matters about the outcome? What should any model aim to achieve in terms of impact and value?
 - Are there significant differences between policy areas?
- What would a model embodying these principles look like? Aspects participants might like to consider include:
 - What are some good starting points? What works in existing models, and where might innovation be required?
 - What is the model made up of?
 - How would you summarise/ articulate the model?
 - What outcomes would this model achieve?
 - In the UK context, is one overarching model viable/achievable? Or are we necessarily talking about separate models? If so, how should these models interlink?

Summary of discussion

The first discussion focused on what steps need to happen, and what conditions need to be in place, in order for children's rights to become more embedded across the UK. Participants noted that many of these are already taking place to a greater or lesser extent, also that there are variations across the different parts of the UK.

- **Awareness of interaction with other acts and legal frameworks** The Equalities Act permeates government, and advocating for rights in relation to existing significant frameworks can have traction. However it was noted that hanging children's rights onto existing frameworks may not always be good enough/effective. It was also noted that an awareness that children's rights outcomes are not necessarily identical to human rights outcomes, and that while the two are linked and can be complementary it is important to maintain a distinction between the two (corporal punishment of children was highlighted as an example of potential tension between human rights and child rights).
- **Differentiate between different levels and kinds of 'policy' / 'policymaker'**. Different audiences will require different techniques and different approaches. A multilevel approach is needed, targeting different levels of policymakers and different spheres of policy (local govt, central govt, parliamentarians, civil service etc). It is also important for children's rights

to be considered not just in terms of the policy that is enacted, but in terms of the policymaking process as well. Understanding the different cultures of different departments and institutions is vital - there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

- **Aim to establish new norms e.g. 'consider the impact of this policy on...'** Legislation by itself is not enough to ensure a rights-based approach. It also needs to be underpinned by cultural attitudes that value a rights-based approach. A shift is needed to 'mainstream' child rights so they are considered as a matter of course in a similar way to policies having to take disability into account. Policing highlighted as an area where successful cultural change has taken place.
- **Resources and culture change** The right resources can help with leading to culture change and embedding a children's rights approach. The space not occupied by children's rights has sometimes been occupied by other important concepts like safeguarding, welfare, child protection etc. Whether and how resources are implemented across the UK jurisdictions and across different policy areas varies considerably. For example it can be extremely hard to use child rights discourse for children in conflict with the law or asylum seekers, particularly at Westminster. However there are some very successful local initiatives (e.g. in Cornwall and Scilly Isles Council)
- **Westminster / four parts of the UK** There are significant differences between the four parts of the UK, and tension in the fact that in some aspects Westminster governs England, in other aspects it governs the UK – muddies the waters. Some parts of the UK have world-leading child rights elements (Wales's child rights impact assessments). In contrast Westminster impact assessments do not adequately include a consideration of children. There is a need for pragmatism when considering what is realistic and achievable with reference to Westminster. A gradual approach with intermediate steps is likely to be more successful than campaigning for wholesale reform. Limited progress is achievable (for instance the fact that a children's rights impact assessment template does now exist). Is there a danger that calling for convergence throughout the UK could mean a levelling down in some parts of the UK, when the goal is 'levelling up' Westminster? The UK government is effectively holding back implementation of UNCRC at devolved level because of its stance, so their reluctance doesn't just affect England.
- **Child rights audit** Empirical analysis of the status quo across a variety of policy contexts, creation of an evidence base that forms the foundation of targeted action and efforts to embed children's rights. Harnessing the body of literature that exists in this area.
- **Embed rights in practice** Example given of reconnecting children in care with their parents in Romania, in which the absence of any consideration of child rights within the policy process had negative effects
- **Building advocates for child rights** For instance parents can be very effective advocates for their children in health contexts.

The second discussion focused on the various methodologies that can be used in further embedding children's rights. Discussion covered the following aspects:

- **Evidence** This can take various forms including:
 - Positive case studies at all levels of policy making illustrating why a children's rights approach make a positive difference to children's lives. Cornwall Council highlighted as an example of a successful cross-council approach
 - Stories/negative 'case studies' of children's rights being breached

- Presenting case studies in language that will be meaningful and appeal to policymakers, and ensuring that the evidence is aligned with their priorities, agendas and mandates.
- Linking children's rights to other outcomes/metrics e.g. CAMHS, exclusions, off-rolling, bullying. Highlighting where a children's rights approach has made a tangible difference. Demonstrating the negative or counterproductive outcomes of not respecting children's rights, including economic outcomes e.g. increased pressure on CAMHS, or comparison of school exclusion rates in England and Scotland. Regulators would be more likely to raise outcomes of not taking rights into account if they could measure these outcomes.
- Highlighting the difference between equality measures and children's rights (where the former do not go far enough)
- **Language**
 - It would make a significant difference if key stakeholders such as the Children's Commissioner for England embraced and deployed the language of children's rights
- **Organisational cultural change**
 - Indices/ ladders/comparison devices: to what extent are children's rights embedded in an organisation?
 - Reporting requirements can act as a prompt. If an organisation needs to complete a form that includes having to consider children's rights this is a step in the right direction. Regulators need to consider children's rights in things like education, social care, healthcare, so that it starts becoming something that institutions have to consider, and so over time becomes an established practice.
 - The power of incremental change: A initial step may be putting material on the website that acknowledges child rights, once this exists it is easier to move forward incrementally (CQC example).
- **Targeting key institutions**
 - Organisations vary in their attitudes and openness to children's rights, ranging across a spectrum from supportive, to ambivalent, to opposed. Change is possible, and the police were highlighted as an organisation that has moved towards an approach that is more oriented towards children's rights.
 - Awareness and implementation of children's rights can vary greatly across a sector. Local government was highlighted as an area where there is a patchy approach, and while children's rights are in scope for some local authorities this is not the case in others.
 - Capacity-building is vital, as knowledge and expertise of how to apply a rights-based approach will vary.
 - The role of select committees is hugely important, see for example the most recent Public Services Committee report focused on 'vulnerability'
 - Thinking strategically about which organisations or sectors are most important to target (i.e. which organisations have the biggest impact on children's lives) can be helpful. The Department of Work & Pensions and the tech sector were highlighted in this respect. It was noted that CPAG may have insights on the best entry points to engage with DWP. Antonia also noted that Participation People can connect with DWP through the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme.

Young Policy Advisors and Participation People, session 3

Aim of session

The aim of this third and final session with young people was to draw out how they would like to be involved in policymaking, how they feel policymakers ought to see young people, and how they would articulate the value of embracing children's rights.

Key questions addressed

- How would you like to be involved in policymaking? What areas of policymaking are you most interested in influencing?
- How do you think you should be seen/ treated, in the eyes of policymakers: as children, with childhood protected as being intrinsically valuable - or as adults-to-be? Is it more important that policy protects the experience of being a child, or prepares you for adulthood? How would you balance these two concerns?
- If you had a policymaker in front of you who was sceptical about the value or importance of children's rights, how would you persuade them? What would you say? Who would you most want to convince? Are there some areas of policy where you think starting with children's rights is more important than others?

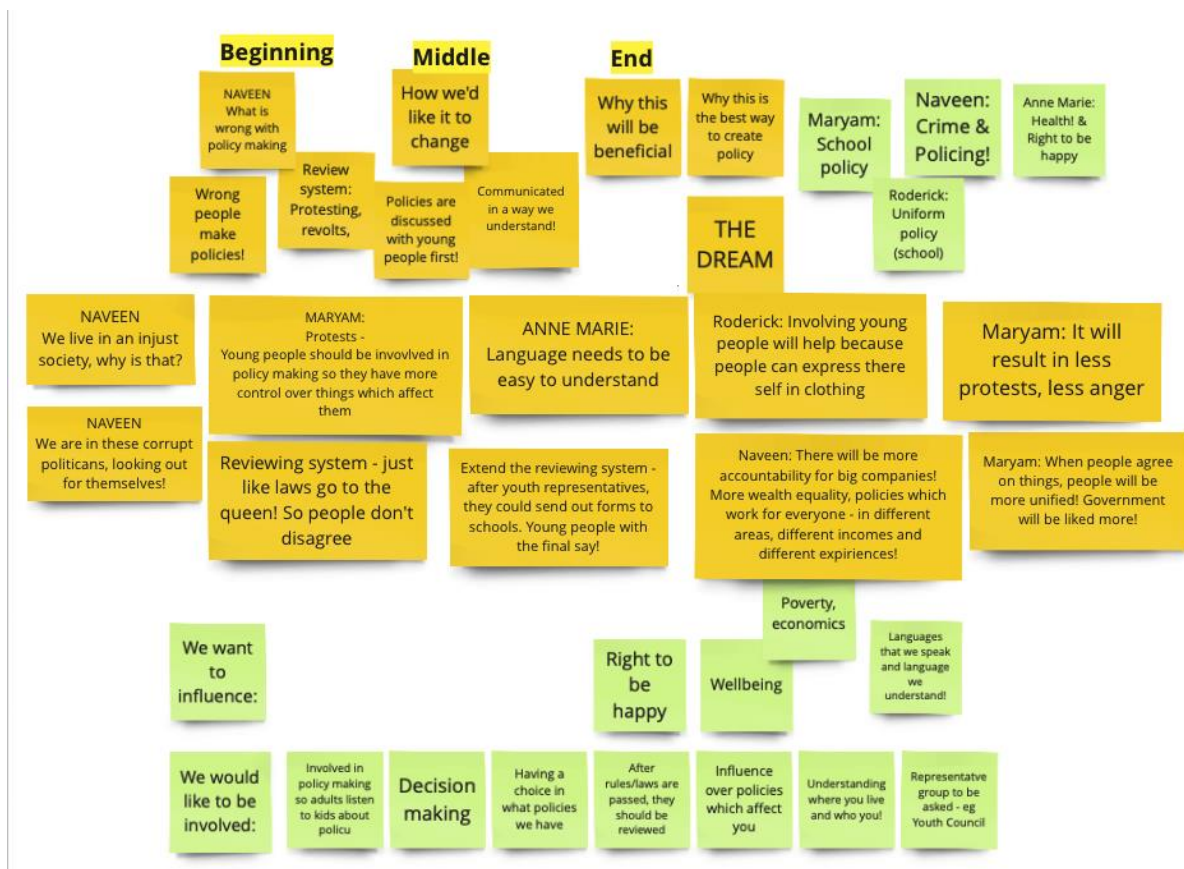
Summary of discussion

Main points raised comprised:

- "Our childhood shapes our future, and your policies shape our childhood".
- Young people should have a say in making decisions, and help should be provided to enable this to take place.
- It is especially important that young people are able to input on policies that directly affect them, and where young people are the intended audience for the policy (school uniform policy given as an example)
- Young people should have an opportunity to review policies before they are implemented and become law. Policies could be sent to youth groups or schools
- Young people should be informed about policy and their rights, partly so they are fully prepared when they turn 18 and have adult rights and responsibilities
- All policies should have their impacts on children and young people considered before they are finalised

Visual summary of discussion 1:

- How would you like to be involved in policymaking?
- What areas of policymaking are you most interested in influencing?



Visual summary of discussion 2:

- How do you think you should be seen/ treated, in the eyes of policymakers: as children, with childhood protected as being intrinsically valuable - or as adults-to-be?
- Is it more important that policy protects the experience of being a child, or prepares you for adulthood?
- How would you balance these two concerns?

Beginning

Question 1:
Be respected- treated as children
, but with the respect of adults
To value our opinions
Entitled to funding from the
government. Feel as though my
opinions are treated as being
inferior to adults.

Adam - Jack's dad was a policy maker and didn't care for Jack's thoughts. Jack felt as though his dad did not care about his opinion and well being. Jack was 17 and turning 18 tomorrow. Jack did not know his left and right when it came to his rights when he turned 18. If Jack's dad had taken a moment to understand Jack's position, then Jack would have had a better start to his life.

Middle

Question 2
Identify what is a child and what
is an adult.
Think about what adult problems
and issues might be and how
these would affect you as a child.
Only teaching/ being involved
what is appropriate and relevant.

Examples of policy you want to
know about: information about
future qualifications, showing
young people what they can do.
Examples of policy that you don't
want to know about: don't
pressure us about money, let us
just enjoy living at home

Charlotte - Poor Jack was not
informed of what would happen
when he turned 18 when he was in
school. Jack wished he was
informed of his options when he
turned 18 before he left school.

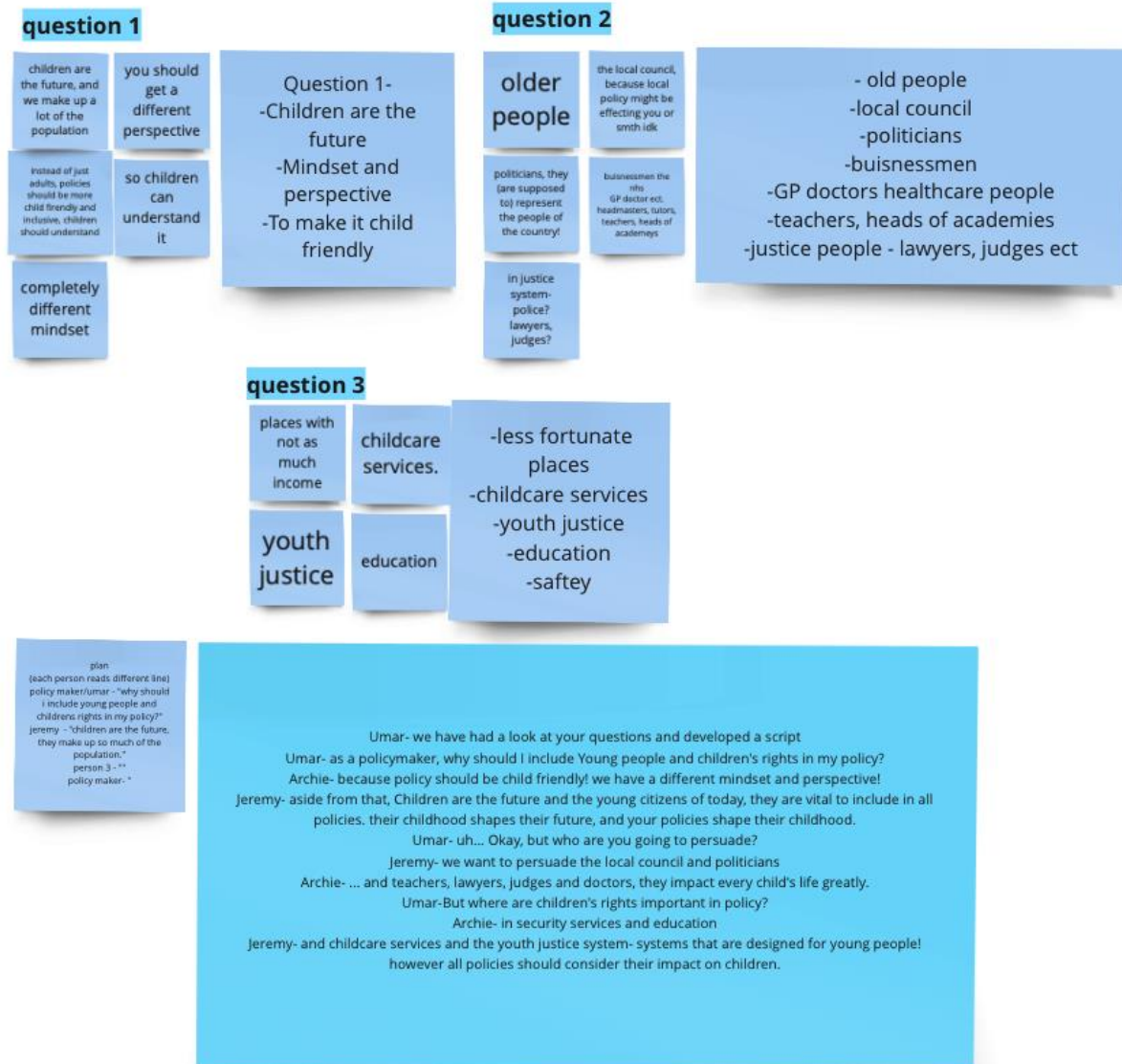
End

Question 3 - AMBER
There's not enough
information about policy.
There should be
information about
important policies around
your rights and entitlement
both as a child and an
adult.

Example: would like to
know what my
entitlements are as an
adult before becoming
one- how rights will
change from when I
was a child.

Visual summary of discussion 3:

- If you had a policymaker in front of you who was sceptical about the value or importance of children's rights, how would you persuade them? What would you say?
- Who would you most want to convince?
- Are there some areas of policy where you think starting with children's rights is more important than others?



There is also a video featuring highlights from the session:

<https://vimeo.com/650824999/eef4acd873>.

Children's Rights Policy Lab, session 3

Aim of the session

The third and final lab session, recognising the divergence in practice that exists across the UK, and variance in appetites among stakeholders for embracing child rights in policy, drilled down into more detail on specific change tactics with regard to influencing different stakeholders.

Key questions addressed

- Who do we want to influence?
- Where are they located?
- What is their position on CR and why?
- What would we want them to think or do differently?
- How might they be persuaded?
- What would be convincing or compelling to them?
- Who would they be most likely to listen to?

Summary of discussions

Following an initial presentation from Antonia Dixey of Participation People, during which she shared the video made by Young Policy Advisors, participants were asked to respond to the input from young people: What can you hear in your own practice? Where are the gaps?:

- Policymakers, practitioners etc are getting better at listening to individual children in terms of setting policy and practice, but less so when it comes to listening to and considering children's voice as a whole
- Scotland has made huge improvements in including children's voices in policy, but there are still occasions where they are either consulted relatively late in the policy process, or they are invited to articulate the problems but are then not invited to help come up with solutions.
- The importance of policy focusing on what young people need in the here and now and not just considering them as future citizens/adults came out very strongly in the young people's session. Children's day to day reality should be embedded in policy.
- The incorporation of children's voice in policy can sometimes be somewhat of an afterthought, and something that is often commissioned out to the voluntary/charity sector as the civil service has not got the necessary expertise. Often the level of children's voice input is constrained by financial considerations.
- Surprising how little children knew about policies – a practical recommendation could come from this.
- Putting child rights at the heart of policy needs to go further than the inclusion of children's voices. Child participation is not the beginning and end of child rights in policy. Rights need to be thought of in an expansive way that going beyond voice.

Comments on how to influence those opposed to children's rights:

- KT: At a quick glance at stakeholders, I did not see the judiciary/ legal professions. There were some negative contributions for us in Scotland, that nearly scuppered our progress to have UNCRC incorporation. We then had to do quite a bit of work to bring those alongside.
- LL comment: The hard nuts vary regionally and by sector... might be useful to gather the strategies for all the hard nuts.

- For us in Scotland, I think now are biggest focus needs to be on the non-children's rights sectors. So parents, the 'public', those who may not think they have a responsibility for children's rights. And the judiciary.
- The judiciary has a specific role re policy-making and there are pathways to (non)engagement with them. While I very much appreciate the importance of their role in applying/interpreting policy, I do wonder if we shouldn't focus in on the 'producers' of policy.

Examples: what strategies have worked well in the past? What experiences are in the room?

- The Andorran children's plan. Most local areas have a children's plan or strategy, but they are often not rights based. Participation is key as children will usually talk about their rights.
- If people are not on board: Force, through legislation; Persuade, through role models; Acculturation – everyone else is doing it. Often people can come around and can end up being the most effective advocates.
- Andorran example: policymakers said we need a national plan, and EU said you should also have a child plan. With a 300k population, they were able to facilitate this within schools.
- Understanding of behaviour change/ psychology – could help to inform approaches.
- Must address 'what's in it for them' question. Often, it's difficult to convince people on moral arguments where people are opposed or do not believe that taking a child right's approach will improve policymaking. What's in it? It will improve policymaking – make it a professional argument. Deployment: you might need a child's rights approach as you could be open to a legal challenge. Economic argument: involving children will have better solutions and demonstrating positive economic argument is key component for argument.
- Ad hoc and opportunistic approaches also work – for example, during COVID, Tory MPs were embracing children's rights language in opposition to union and H&S issues. Deployment/ tactics – the way rights language was used and engaged with was interesting. Many raised children's right to education and play. This is now dissipated but worth noting. Stick & carrot – underlying thread of the law. During covid we got lots of sympathetic articles in the Telegraph about the need for CRIA's in the context of a child's right to play!
- When pushing for things, must consider the 'culture war' factor. Children's rights are not current not perceived in that way – but human rights is a very 'culture war' topic. Framing need to be strategic and tactical. COVID is an opportunity. Language – how is children's rights distinctive? Thinking point to keep in mind.
- UNCRC is widely ratified. How to build cross party support? The UK published indicators on childhood happiness. Children in UK amongst the most unhappy – powerful argument. Children's social care – one of the key issues, right to contact to see relatives, not currently thought about. There is a lot to be built in helping people to know what a child rights approach can give to children. Argument – using UNCRC as a theoretical framework can help children to make sense of childhood and can be a powerful argument. Happiness metric/ potential lever.
- Strategic – children's rights/ human rights – must be thought about carefully. Across time: whether to embed? Where there are champions in the right place, that's incredibly important. Advocates in influential positions can help. Framework – use the law to promote children's rights. Increasing children's participation in policy drafting stages of can be helpful by increasing responsibility to young people ie. Nicola Sturgeon. Behaviour change and longitudinal approaches – children who know their rights will have a long term impact.

When policymakers experience professional training early on, they can go on to have an influence in their roles.

- NI have the DUP... and they are averse to the idea of human rights. We do, however, have entry points - child participation is one. Again, I have seen it act as a 'gateway' to broader child rights acceptance. Or sometimes, we get openings with using rights language for certain children (children with disabilities). And sometimes, we stress the moral roots of all human rights any how that aligns to their religious values (since lots of resistance in some faith contexts).
- The influence of the role of women and children in health context has grown due to different approaches: first, wider societal shifts and awareness. Second, specific interventions – getting people in to talk about how their lives have been negatively impacted by policies. Another approach is advocates working at different stages and through multiple approaches in each of the key organisations.
- Issue of policy window, problem awareness, what are the ideas considered, what is the political appetite? Highlighting examples from other countries can be another lever. Problem awareness – well exemplified document on issues of not being aware of rights, and the impact it can make. For policy ideas, there will always be a long list – must be ready for when it comes to the top of the list with evidence on importance of children's rights.
- Important to ensure that you've not only got the usual suspects – bringing other organisations that the gov would not expect can help to build more traction. Important to get a bigger community of supporters which can be more persuasive, as well as unexpected spokespeople.

Appendix

Re-cap of the evidence base: why a rights-based approach?

Although the UK Government has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is not yet incorporated into UK law. The country case studies carried out as part of Phase 1 of the Childhood Policy Programme set out how, in Wales and Scotland, explicit commitments to children's rights do underpin policymaking, but also highlight that it is hard to discern how this is having an impact on policy, or on children's day-to-day lives.

It has been suggested that a more explicit focus on children's rights might lead to greater coherence in how policy is made. However, there are questions as to what interventions are needed to guarantee these rights, and who must hold the duties to ensure a child's rights can be exercised. Children's rights have also often been articulated within a legalistic discourse and many proponents of a rights-based approach believe that rights must be conceptualised beyond the law in order to be successful. (Extract from Phase 1 synthesis document)

Background on the childhood policy programme

The Childhood Policy Programme seeks to re-frame debates around childhood in both the public and policy spaces and break down academic, policy and professional silos in order to explore new conceptualisations of children in policymaking. Work on the programme has included a number of research activities including policymaking landscape reviews for each of the four parts of the UK; case studies on approaches across the UK towards children leaving care and childhood poverty, and evidence on the effectiveness of these different approaches; and a series of stakeholder workshops with policymakers, practitioners and academics.

The programme centres on three key themes. These are:

- **Children's voice and participation:** Focusing on how children's voices can be built into policy, and how children's voices can most effectively be heard and acted upon by policymakers.
- **Rights-based approaches to policy coherence:** Developing a deeper understanding of what childhood policy could look like were a rights-based approach to be more central to policy formation, delivery, and enactment across the UK.
- **'Being a child versus becoming an adult':** Investigating how children are positioned in policy and exploring whether improvements could be made through altering the balance between the two perspectives of 'being' and 'becoming'.

In addition to these three themes, the Childhood programme has a focus on inequalities, which cuts across the themes. The programme is also underpinned by a focus on all four parts of the UK.

Childhood programme outputs on children's rights

Phase 1 synthesis: In 2020 a synthesis of the first phase of the Childhood programme was published. This report synthesises the work of Phase I of the programme, and explores the role of the state in childhood from three perspectives:

1) Exploring the assumptions which underpin the experience of childhood and the development of childhood policy, but are not explicit or visible in the policymaking process;

2) Exploring the impact of policy decisions on children's outcomes, in particular across the four UK nations, noting that it is not only policy about children that has an impact on children;

3) Exploring the way in which the experience of children is valued in policy making, and ways in which this can be articulated in the policy process.

Case studies: As part of Phase 1 four case studies were commissioned, exploring the childhood policy landscape in each of the four parts of the UK. Each of the case studies includes consideration of the positioning of children's rights within the policy landscape.

- England case study
- Northern Ireland case study
- Scotland case study
- Wales case study

Provocation papers: A series of provocation papers exploring important and challenging childhood policy topics written by experts from across the arts, humanities and social sciences forms part of the programme. The following provocation papers in particular encompass a focus on children's rights:

- How Should We Think About Childhood and Children? Professor David Archard
- Scottish Youth Justice and the Legacy of Kilbrandon Dr Michelle Donnelly
- Can We Realise Children's Rights In A Digital World? Professor Sonia Livingstone FBA
- Is sustainable development bad news for children's rights? Professor Aoife Nolan