



**Seen, Heard, Respected? Being a Child in the
Scottish Justice System**

Mary Glasgow

CEO

22nd October 2024



children1st.org.uk

Starting with Children's voices – Sophie's Song



Our Purpose

- To prevent harm to children caused by abuse, neglect and poverty
- To protect Children's right to live safely within their own families and communities
- To deliver high quality family support to children, families across Scotland
- To help children and their parents recover from the impact of childhood trauma
- To influence legislation, policy and lead transformational change in practice that puts children's rights and needs at the centre

Our Approach

Our approach is rooted in the understanding that strong, safe, relationships are what prevent and protect children from harm and enable them to recover from trauma and abuse.



Putting Scotland's Children first

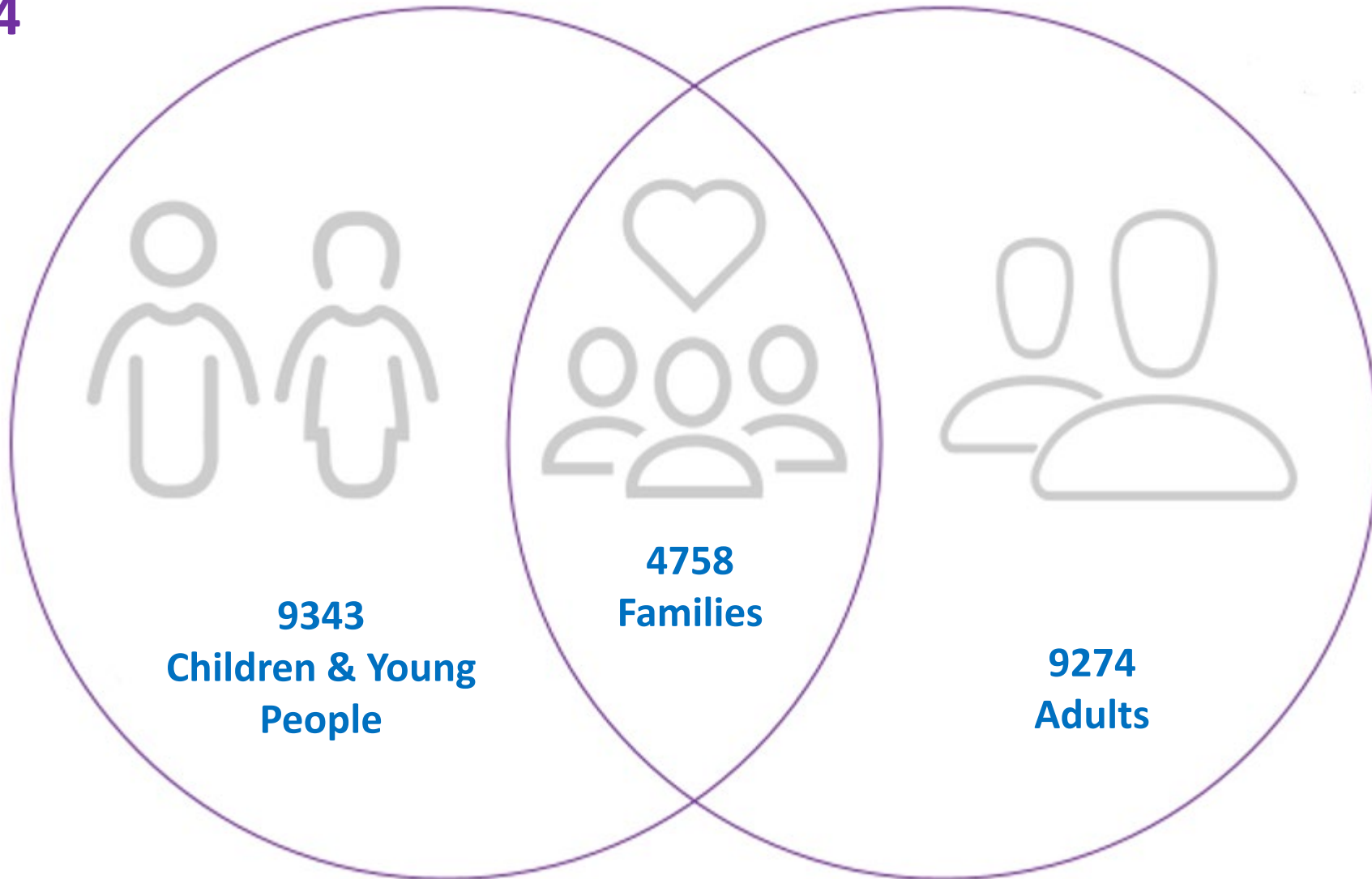
Children 1st have local teams to protect children and work alongside families. As well as locally-based services and hubs, Children 1st has the following national services:

- Children 1st Parentline
- Bairnshoose
- Bide Oot
- Child Wellbeing & Protection in Sport (CWPS)
- Case Management Support Service (CMSS)
- Financial Wellbeing
- Safeguarders Panel Team



2023 - 2024

**18,617
individuals**



Children 1st Safeguarders Panel Team



Safeguarders Panel

Information to help your family
navigate the journey ahead

- Established in 2013
- Recruitment and selection
- Management of appointments and feedback
- Support
- Monitoring performance
- Training

Dream Fund – Creating the Bairns Hoose

The Dream: changing justice, care and recovery for child victims and witnesses.

Children 1st, in partnership with Victim Support Scotland, The University of Edinburgh and Children England applied to the Dream Fund with the ambition of transforming the justice system for child victims and witnesses of crime: **driving systems change that would make their experiences child-centred, trauma-informed and recovery-focused.**

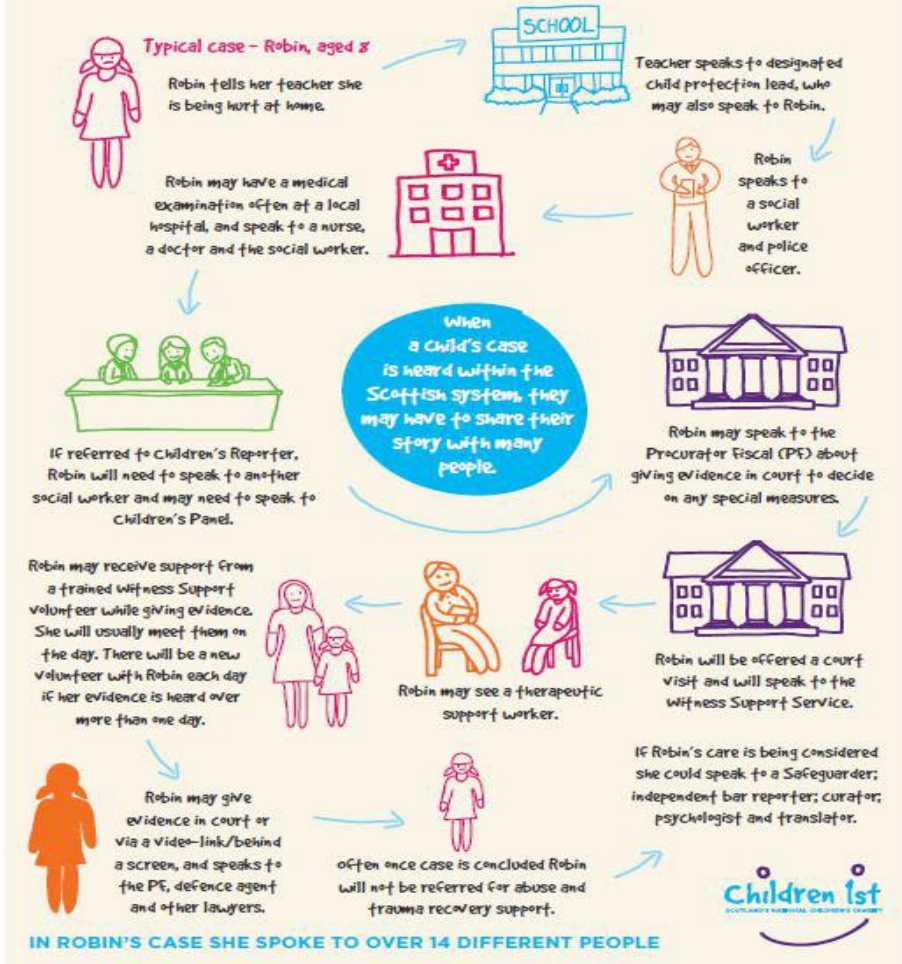
The dream:

- To get children justice
- To protect their human rights
- To keep them safe
- To help them heal

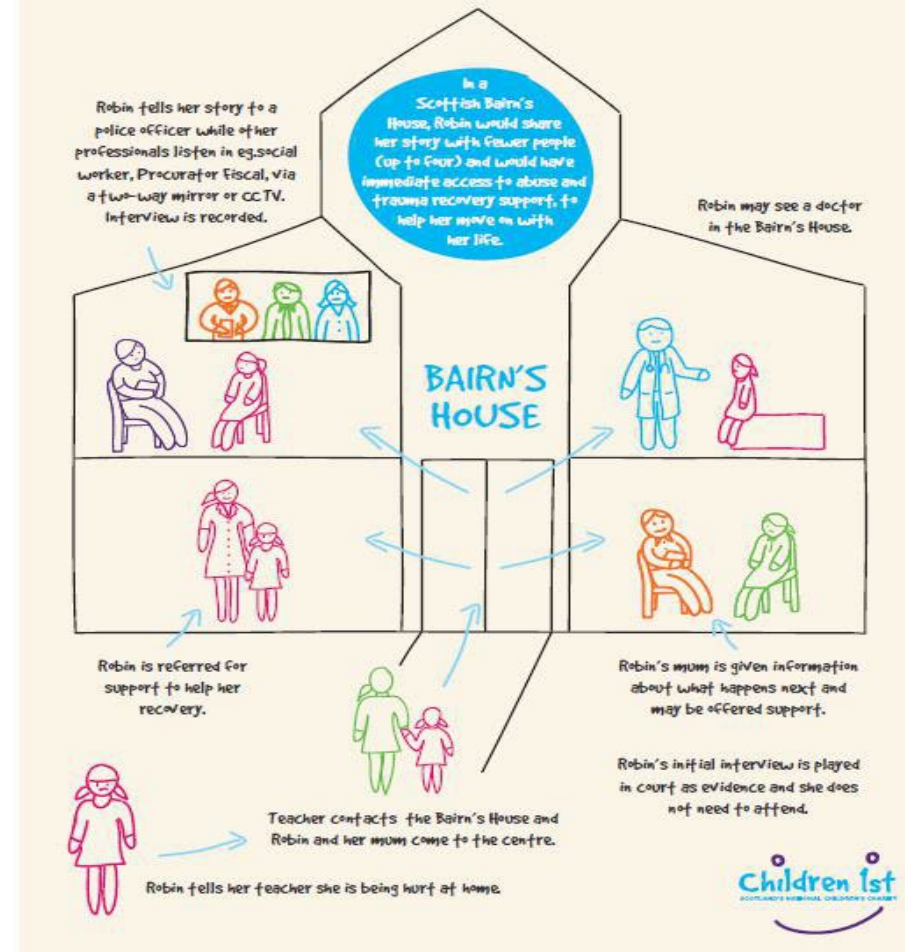
Successful bid and awarded £1.5m in 2020



WHAT CAN HAPPEN WHEN A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON SPEAKS OUT ABOUT ABUSE



WHAT COULD HAPPEN WHEN A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON SPEAKS OUT ABOUT ABUSE



“They put me through hell for 14 months just waiting and waiting... I had got myself all prepared and then it didn’t happen.

It’s devastating when you think it’s nearly over and then it drags on for a lot longer. When I was told there was a further delay, I felt I could no longer do it.

If it had happened when they first said it would – I would have felt 10 times better. I could have given better and stronger evidence.”

Waiting

“I know I should feel better now that he is in jail, but I keep having flashbacks of court”



Retraumatiation

Children, families and professionals tell us change is needed in our justice system



The story so far: North Strathclyde Bairns Hoose

PHASE TWO EVALUATION REPORT
(AUGUST 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2024)

Mary Mitchell, Camille Warrington, John Devaney, Jennifer Lavoie, Eilish Lamb, Louise Hill, Chris Wretman, and Carol Duncan



A Parent's Frustration

By Lydia's mum

If you were affected by the words of Lydia then step, for one moment into the shoes of her parents.

IMAGINE having to be the one to wake your child up in the morning and tell them what has happened.

IMAGINE being the one to tell her how little she is moment on and taking her that her life from now on is going to be oh so very different.

IMAGINE her having to hear this and then to be questioned by the police without her mum, her comfort blanket and one of the only few people left in the whole world that she feels she can still trust.

IMAGINE having to tell her that the people we have told her since she was tiny, who were there to protect her, are the very people who are failing her.

They are failing her because the justice system where it comes to child "victims" is very much broken.

IMAGINE when you as an adult, can't understand the very system that not only failed her before when the signs were there and swept under the carpet arrested that someone in all their "wisdom" decided it would be a good idea to release him on bail.

IMAGINE what it's like to be sitting in a cafe with your child and watch her disappear under the table only to look under said table and see your child as white as a ghost and shaking like a leaf. To ask her what's wrong only to be told, once she is calm enough to speak, that she saw "him" on a bus that passed and she was so scared.

And then trying to reassure her that his trial would be soon and that he couldn't hurt her anymore. And maybe he couldn't but the fact that his trial got postponed, postponed and postponed again traumatised her just as much as what he had put her through.

Now, try to imagine if all that's filed your brain what effect it's got on a child that's already been abused and assaulted!

Crimes against children should be a top priority at courts and perpetrators who have done wrong against children should not be bailed! Children aren't mature enough to comprehend it all, the need some semblance of closure asap. And while I can appreciate that Covid played some part in the delay,

2 1/2 years for an actual trial date is a joke especially with the prospect of having to go to court as a witness is hanging over their head. There must have been some way that serious crimes could have proceeded to trial a lot sooner - a closed court, video linking, socially distanced jurors - which if the court was closed then should have been quite straight forward! I realise we were living with unprecedented times, but we are meant to be dealing with intelligent people here.

Lydia was convenient when she was helping build a case against this heinous and poor excuse for a human being but when she needed the support and were they?

When the court dates for the numerous "first-dits" that I had to phone the court to find out what was happening? No-one was ever in contact with us to let us know - that needs to change. The people directly affected by the case have a right to know what is going on - this also needs to change.

You might have guessed that I'm pissed off! It's not helped when the "supposed" system in place to protect innocent people fail and make them just as much a victim as the accused has in the first instance!

It took the courts so long to proceed to a trial date that the person who hurt Lydia and her siblings died closure now? "Oh he's dead so that's that, case closed, bye-bye, so long, farewell, don't call us - we won't call you!" The fact that he is dead doesn't make a difference to Lydia or her siblings for other kids like them - they still need to see justice in some way - some recognition for what they have been through.

Now are my words likely to make a dent in the conscious of people who not only failed my children but other children like them? Probably not but hopefully the words of Lydia might be enough to reiterate the message that things need to change. And not just to say "oh well we need to change things" but to actually change them!

It shouldn't take for a child to point out where the system is failing - and you really should be ashamed of yourself that it seems that it does!

As Lydia said, things need to change.

Things Need to Change

This is my story. Please listen to me when I tell you. Things need to change.

It was Bam, I was sad, My Mum was upset too, At that moment I knew something was up, Something was not quite right throughout the night.

I found out he had been arrested, I didn't know exactly what was going on, I was 10 years old, And what I had just been told was going to change my life.

Sometime went by then the Police arrived, They came into my room, whilst I was in bed, in my pyjamas, I wanted to have a say, but it was 9pm, I was 10 years old tucked up in my bed, This was the wrong time, You must remember I was a young child feeling confused and upset.

We are children, Please don't treat us like adults, Things need to change.

I was confused, I was scared, I got in the car with a Social Worker, I didn't know what was going to happen, Nothing had been explained to me.

When we arrived, I felt wary as it was scary, What was about to happen to me? I went in the lights were bright, I felt sick.

They started to ask questions, I felt interrogated, My emotions were everywhere, I needed a break to breathe and self-regulate.

The room was very bright, It was supposed to help me relax, But, in fact it made me feel uncomfortable, I wanted it to be over, It was too much pressure.

Please remember not to rush us, We need time to process what's going on, Too many questions were asked all of once.

We are children, Please don't treat us like adults, Things need to change.

I was annoyed, I was angry, I was confused, Why was it taking so long? Was the court case going to happen?

It felt like he was winning, Because the trial kept getting delayed, I could feel stress building inside me, I had other stresses alongside me, It was getting too much for me.

Waiting, waiting, and more waiting, Delay after delay, I was getting impatient, I wanted to move on, I wanted to be happy again.

Please remember I was a child, The court system is not right for children, It is very scary, So please make it more child-friendly, Make the process easier, brighter, and less scary.

We are children, Don't treat us like adults.

This was my story, Please listen to me when I tell you, Things need to change.

By Lydia, 12 years old



Thank you

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