

## Our Health Matters 2024: Making Child Health a Priority

### RCPCH

The [Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health](#) (RCPCH) believe that children and young people are at the heart of everything we do. We want to improve child health across the UK with children and young people.

### RCPCH &Us

The [RCPCH &Us](#) network is for children, young people, parents and carers, it was created to actively seek and share their views to influence and shape policy and practice. We're proud to help protect and promote children's rights and enable more than 2,000 children and young people each year to participate through our projects and events.

### Guidance for workers

Thank you for supporting your young people to participate in this session which can be delivered as an assembly or a short session and support the voice of children and young people.

Although children and young people under 18 cannot vote in the elections, they all have the right to be listened to and taken seriously (Article 12 UNCRC) and given the chance to be active citizens.

Children and young people may feel that some of their rights are currently being denied or they may be passionate about a particular issue and want to make a change. To support this in relation to democracy, active citizenship and child health, we have prepared a presentation "Our Health Matters" for all young people. We have also created a short video for you to show young people and to get them talking about child health and their rights.

### [Our Health Matters 2024](#)

The upcoming General Election is an opportunity to share with children, young people and election candidates the RCPCH &Us Manifesto which calls upon the incoming Government to prioritise children's health.

The manifesto draws upon data and work developed as part of our consultation and outreach work with children and young people, with over 700 taking part in sharing ideas, and a youth social action project turning these ideas into action.

We want more young people to be able to get involved and give them the opportunity to express their views and join our belief that child health is an important issue. We have created free resources for you to use with young people in the run up to the election, to raise awareness of child health priorities, lobby your local candidates as well discuss their rights and what matters to them.

The attached resources are designed to be delivered as an assembly or a short session. We believe by exploring such an important subject like child health, it will help young people to understand more about the link between health and politics and might make young people more likely to vote in the future.

Resources include:

- Webpage with information [www.rcpch.ac.uk/our\\_health\\_matters\\_2024](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/our_health_matters_2024)
- Slide deck for use in sessions
- Guidance for workers that includes a script for the session and links to other democracy resources

- Posters created by young people in the Our Health Matters 2024 project group
- RCPCH &Us Manifesto video
- iParl campaigning tool
- Get involved on social media using #OurHealthMatters2024

### Using iParl & Safeguarding

The resources also make use of a campaigning tool called [iParl](#) which links directly to all candidates standing to become Members of Parliament (MPs, MSs, MLAs, MSPs). The tool is easy to use and requires a postcode to locate your candidates and an email address to send an email and authenticate the constituent.

We suggest that groups use their school/college/youth provision email and postcode with your support and guidance in order to safeguard your young people. We have included in the email a letter that is sent to candidates with a safeguarding statement which informs them that this request is coming from a young person in their constituency and that it would not be appropriate for them to arrange meetings or send them party political information.

We would therefore ask that you discuss with the young people about staying safe when communicating with external people/politicians/candidates around their safety and what processes they should follow if they feel uncomfortable or unsure with any correspondence, or how to arrange a safe meeting with externals.

### Thank you

Thank you from our young people for your help with using and sharing these resources and raising the need for child health to be a priority for the new UK Government. You may also be interested in the wider [RCPCH Manifesto for Child Health](#) aimed at the political parties and decision makers.

Should you require further information or have any questions please don't hesitate to contact the RCPCH Children and Young People's Engagement Team at [and\\_us@rcpch.ac.uk](mailto:and_us@rcpch.ac.uk).




Many thanks for your support,



RCPCH &Us

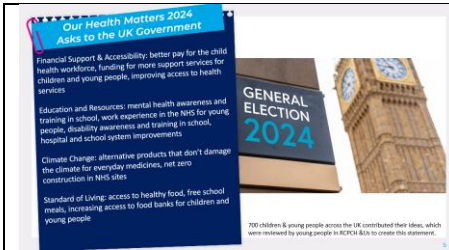




Slide deck script

	<p>Today we have a request from young people who are part of a national volunteer project to improve child health. Their charity is called RCPCH.</p>
	<p>The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health is a charity which helps to train paediatricians, who are doctors for children and young people, as well as campaigning and lobbying for change across the country and the world, so that all children and young people can be healthy, happy and well.</p> <p>Children and young people get involved through RCPCH &amp;Us, a network of volunteers passionate about making a difference.</p> <p>One of the projects has focused on the upcoming General Election on July 4<sup>th</sup>. As part of this project, they want candidates and the new UK Government to prioritise child health. And they need our help!</p>
	<p>First of all, though, it all starts with rights. Who has heard of children's rights?</p> <p>We follow something called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which has a whole list of articles (rules) that countries have to follow to keep you healthy happy and well. It was written in 1989 and nearly the whole world has signed up to it (only America hasn't).</p> <p>The ones that RCPCH &amp;Us volunteers have prioritised for our work are:</p> <p>Article 12 – where children and young people's views influence decisions that affect them, like the new UK Government prioritising child health.</p> <p>Article 23 – the right for children and young people with disabilities to lead a full and active life. In health this means making sure they are able to get involved in, understand and contribute to their health appointments and plans.</p> <p>Article 24 – to have the best hospitals and doctors looking after you so you have the best healthcare and services possible, as well as having access to water and good food.</p> <p>Article 27 – to have a good standard of living like where you live, the food you eat, the clothes you wear. We know the cost-of-living crisis is affecting</p>

	<p>the physical and mental health of children and young people, and this needs to be changed.</p> <p>Article 28 – right to be in education, which also means not missing school for health appointments if possible and being allowed to go on school trips or take part in school activities, even if you have a health condition.</p> <p>Article 31 – that you get the chance to enjoy life and to rest, relax and play. For children and young people with health needs or conditions, this might be that health services have to provide training to youth groups so that it can support their health needs.</p>
 <p><b>Our Health Matters 2024 manifesto statement</b></p> <p>Our hope is that the new UK Government will make child health a priority, supporting the rights of every child and young person to be healthy, happy and well.</p> <p>They can do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>properly funding child health services and increasing training opportunities for child health care professionals</li> <li>providing children and young people with better access to the best possible health care</li> <li>ensuring that all children and young people get access to healthy free school meals and have access to facilities that support their physical and mental health in schools</li> <li>providing access to more preventative services to support the most vulnerable in our society, tackling health inequalities</li> <li>supporting us, the future leaders, to have the best possible start in life.</li> </ul> <p><small>700 children &amp; young people across the UK contributed their ideas, which were reviewed by young people in RCPCH &amp; Us to create this statement.</small></p> 	<p>700 children and young people told us what they want the new UK Government to prioritise. As a youth led group, we came together to look at all the answers and think about what needs to go into a child health manifesto by children and young people. A manifesto is a statement that sets out what you plan to do – political parties do this so that people know what to expect if they vote for them, so we thought we should do one for them on child health priorities.</p> <p>The Our Health Matters 2024 manifesto says:</p> <p>Our hope is that the new UK Government will make child health a priority, supporting the rights of every child and young person to be healthy, happy and well.</p> <p>They can do this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>properly funding child health services and increasing training opportunities for child health care professionals</li> <li>providing children and young people with better access to the best possible health care</li> <li>ensuring that all children and young people get access to healthy free school meals and have access to facilities that support their physical and mental health in schools</li> <li>providing access to more preventative services to support the most vulnerable in our society, tackling health inequalities</li> <li>supporting us, the future leaders, to have the best possible start in life.</li> </ul> <p><b>EXTENSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:</b>          What do you think about the topics chosen? What would you put into a manifesto to improve children and young people’s health? What are in the political party manifestos that will support children and young people?</p>

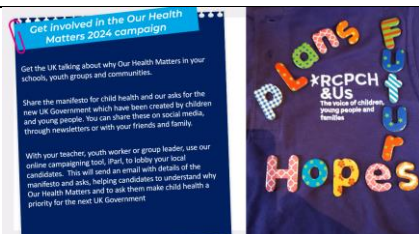


In addition to manifesto statements, political parties create a series of policy actions that they will do when elected. We did the same, giving them ideas about what needs to be done on a practical level to help children and young people. These include:

- **Financial Support & Accessibility:** better pay for the child health workforce, funding for more support services for children and young people, improving access to health services
- **Education and Resources:** mental health awareness and training in school, work experience in the NHS for young people, disability awareness and training in school, hospital and school system improvements
- **Climate Change:** alternative products that don't damage the climate for everyday medicines, net zero construction in NHS sites
- **Standard of Living:** access to healthy food, free school meals, increasing access to food banks for children and young people

**EXTENSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

Do you agree with these policy asks? What would be “even better if” in your local area that would support children and young people to be healthy, happy and well? What is missing that you could campaign on locally? Which rights do these link too (answer in the video)?




RCPCH &Us young people need your help to get these messages out there and for the candidates standing for election, to prioritise child health.

We've thought of a few ways you can help, by talking about child health and why Our Health Matters to the people who are voting, by asking people to register to vote so that their vote counts in the election, by sharing our manifesto and asks on social media or with friends and family.

For groups you can use our online campaigning tool, iParl, which sends an email to all the candidates in your area to raise the issue of child health and asks them to prioritise this in their campaign and in the new UK Government.

**EXTENSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

How can we get involved? What are successful campaigns that you have seen? How can we lobby candidates and political parties to stand up for child health?

	<p>Thank you for listening. RCPCH &amp;Us works with over 1500 children and young people every year to help improve child health. If you want to get involved individually or as a group, get in touch. We have projects on climate change, asthma, epilepsy, training doctors, mental health, improving health services, podcasting and more!</p>
<p>Additional resources: If you want to extend this into a longer democracy session, there are lots of great resources available. Have a look at</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="https://www.ukyouth.org/2024/04/supporting-young-people-in-the-lead-up-to-the-general-election/">https://www.ukyouth.org/2024/04/supporting-young-people-in-the-lead-up-to-the-general-election/</a> for lots of different resources for young people</li><li>• <a href="https://www.youngcitizens.org/resources/democracy-teaching-resources/">https://www.youngcitizens.org/resources/democracy-teaching-resources/</a> for primary and secondary schools</li><li>• For more information about children's rights go to <a href="https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/">https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/</a></li></ul>	