

**We'll talk
about it.**

Working together
to give children
a voice



SCCYP!



Respecting children, supporting parents: working towards violence-free childhood

The Mask project was produced for the SCCYP conference at The Hub, Edinburgh in June 2007. The Children's Parliament explored the conference theme of positive parenting through creative arts. Their team worked with groups in Midlothian, South Ayrshire, the Western Isles and with P6 & P5 pupils from Gorgie Dalry and St Mary's Primary schools in Leith.

The work was created through sessions combining mask making, theatre skills and creative writing. This approach is typical of the way the Children's Parliament uses the creative arts to explore children's views, work with them to look for solutions and ultimately inform adults about things which affect the lives of children.

Children created pairs of giant masks each symbolising all the characteristics of good and bad parenting. All the written text came directly from the children's words, thoughts, ideas and experiences centered around the theme of non-violent parenting.

The overall message is about adults and children working together to positively support each other.





Making the adults

After participating in specially designed games and drama activities intended to explore *emotions* and *parenting* the children created 'picture doodles' where they gathered their thoughts and ideas using words and pictures.

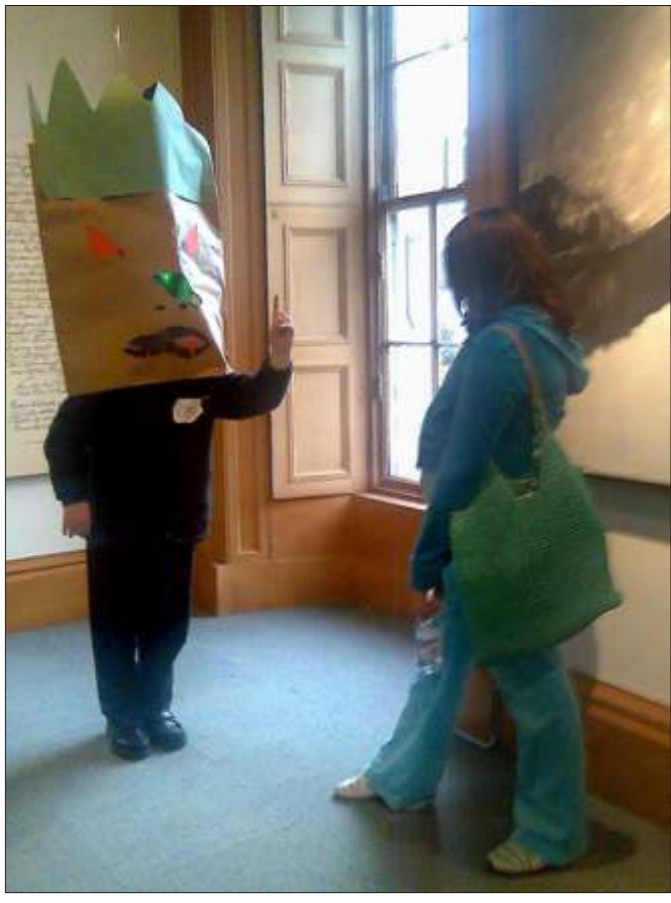
This process developed the vocabulary that inspired the creation of the masks, the dramas and a final installation.

The huge totem pole style masks were made using the simple technique of folded brown paper packaging decorated with coloured card and paper.

Working in small teams, and briefed to be as imaginative as possible, the children made exaggerated negative and positive caricatures of parents and other adult authority figures.

After the final finishing touches were added the masks were then ready to be used in the dramatic work where they would symbolise adults with either 'good' or 'bad' parenting skills.





Acting up

The final activity was designed to explore, from the child's point of view, what works and what doesn't when adults are disciplining children.

The children imagined possible scenarios requiring adult intervention. For example when a child:

- *dashes across a busy road*
- *argues with their brothers and sisters*
- *continually leaves their bedroom like a tip*
- *steals biscuits from the treat box*
- *plays with matches*
- *stays out later than 8pm curfew*
- *is cheeky or swears*
- *is lazy and doesn't help with the house work*
- *breaks something (perhaps accidentally)*
- *teases another child*
- *repeatedly does something despite being asked to stop*
- *gets clothes mucky*
- *gets caught smoking*

The group then split into teams of three or four and improvised a scene around one of the situations.

The final dramas were acted out in two parts. In the first the adult represented in the scene wore an oversized 'angry' mask. This scene would end with a negative, often violent, response from the adult.

The team would then re-enact the same scene, this time with the adult character wearing a 'kind mask' and dealing with the same situation in a non-violent and positive way.

Each scene would then be offered to the whole group, with comments and suggestions invited from the 'audience'. The outcome was modified if needed, with the opportunity for new 'actors' to step into the roles until a fair and mutually respectful resolution was agreed.

I wish you'd never been born!

Get up and help or I'll throttle you!

Don't run across the road, stupid!

belt!!

skelp!

You'll feel the back of my hand!

You're in BIG trouble!

wallop

thump!



Promise me you won't do that again... come here I love you.

Please don't do that, you could get hurt.

We'll sort it out together... don't worry. I'll support you, we'll be ok.

Where were you? I was very worried.

I'd appreciate your help son.



A natural synergy brought these two organisations together in a formal partnership in 2006. The Children's Parliament processes offer SCCYP staff an opportunity to engage directly with younger children through The Children's Parliament's monthly programme. Using the creative arts children consider issues in their lives that are important to them. SCCYP and The Children's Parliament staff make sure the children's views are fed into relevant processes and forums.

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A central aim of **The Children's Parliament** is that children have opportunities to talk for themselves and **SCCYP** supports residential events where children will meet MSPs and other decision makers to give first hand knowledge of their lives and to work together to bring about positive change.

SCCYP and **The Children's Parliament** celebrate the valuable contribution children make by bringing their unique account of their lives to the fore and by being willing to work together in a fruitful partnership. This creates a dialogue between children and adults that effectively challenges the negative stereotype of children as problems and propels them to a place where their talents and potential can be respected and built upon.

The Children's Parliament and SCCYP are positive about Scotland's children

The Children's Parliament believes in the power of children to make positive change in their lives. By working with children from a diverse range of backgrounds and with varying abilities, we have evidenced that children are the experts in their own lives. If given the confidence and the opportunity they are capable of giving very powerful messages to decision-makers about what needs to be different in their lives.

Through the creative arts, children are empowered to honestly consider a range of issues that they feel they would like to change or comment upon. The children consider what adults need to do and what children themselves can do to make a difference.

The Children's Parliament supports children to make effective and constructive contributions in their local communities, not merely as rights claimants but as positive and valuable citizens.

www.childrensparliament.org.uk

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) was set up to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people in Scotland, rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Commissioner, Kathleen Marshall, says her job is about 'keeping promises' made by our government - to do certain things to make life better for children and young people - when it signed up to the UNCRC. She does her utmost to ensure that those promises are kept: by reminding people of what they are; exploring what they mean; and monitoring how they are turned into practice.

Kathleen's remit extends to all children, from birth to 18, and up to 21 for those who have been in the care system. She has a duty to consult children and young people about her work and involve them in it.

www.sccyp.org.uk

