**BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT EVENT**

**Friday 3 August 2018, Glasgow Green**

Year of Young People Ambassadors and Communic18 were joined by the Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland to discuss the ways in which businesses affect young people’s lives today and the impacts this can have on their human rights. The workshop was held at Go Live! at The Green in Glasgow. Young people aged 15 to 24 shared their thoughts and ideas about how they engage with businesses, how they are affected by businesses and how they think businesses could improve in the future.

Themes that came through strongly in the discussion included:

* working conditions and terms of employment
* global impact, environmental footprint and corporate social responsibility - participants felt that the personal impact a business has on them is directly connected to the business’ global attitudes

**1. In what ways do businesses affect the lives of children and young people?**

* Working conditions
* providing access to employment
* health & safety in the workplace e.g. toilet breaks
* low wages
* different minimum wage for different ages
* contracts – are they understandable?
* zero hours contracts – few rights and no stability
* child labour in supply chains, with impact on the right to education
* Treatment of children and young people as customers/consumers
* advertising - pressure to buy particular products and brands, with possible impact on mental health i.e. body image/self-esteem
* “visual segregation” - some shops queue young people to monitor them in smaller batches
* accessibility
* toxic substances in products e.g. bangles
* Digital/on-line
* right to remove
* protection from inappropriate content
* social media companies can strongly influence young people
* Communities
* companies making changes to infrastructure in communities may prevent children from enjoying their right to play and to a clean, safe environment
* some people choose to use a business based on local impact

**2. How do businesses affect your lives?**

* As workers
* provide employment, Modern Apprenticeships and internships
* rights and safety in the workplace
* zero hours contracts
* unpaid trial shifts
* determine the time able to spend with friends and family
* As customers/consumers
* supply products and services, including WiFi connection
* innovation
* marketing - stimulate demand to keep up with the latest products e.g. mobile phones
* influence purchasing decisions e.g. lower prices for unhealthy foods
* the quality of a product can impact on health e.g. food hygiene
* banks set interest rates
* visual segregation (see above)
* lack of different shops in rural areas
* As citizens
* boost economy
* provide information through media outlets, however this can also have an impact on mental health i.e. body image (TV, magazines and social media)
* ethics e.g. testing on animals, contributing to good causes, raising awareness of particular issues
* reinforce gender stereotypes

**3. How can children and young people influence businesses?**

* Consumer power e.g. choice of product/brand, boycotting certain companies and promoting others, shopping in local shops
* Social media, investigative TV programmes
* Complaints e.g. writing a letter, speaking to a manager, reporting to governing body
* Regulatory mechanisms, inspections
* Transparency
* Petitions, including to the Scottish Parliament; or through change.org
* Voting, legislation
* Direct action, demonstrating
* Employees can influence companies they work for, including through joining a union or employee group

**4. How can businesses improve?**

* General operations
* pay taxes and remove tax loopholes
* operate fairly for employees, customers and wider communities
* ask businesses to trial new policies and then review
* use “co-design”
* transparency – let customers know where products come from
* be easier and more approachable
* Working conditions
* increase wages/pay the living wage (at the same level for everybody, regardless of age)
* workplace protections
* offer work experience
* more available apprenticeships
* Social impact
* ethical business conduct
* abide by UK law in all countries of operation, for example on child labour
* pay attention to effects on local communities e.g. fair pay, no zero hours contracts, environmental impacts
* think more about the environment – less packaging and more recyclable packaging
* work towards a community benefit

**5. What can the Scottish Government do?**

* Make the needs of employees and consumers primary
* Audit impact
* Certification schemes that businesses can work towards e.g. disabled people friendly
* Encourage young people to be business owners
* More compulsory education for children and young people about business and enterprise