

# **Your Guide to Children's Rights**

**and the United Nations Convention  
on the Rights of the Child**



**A booklet for parents, carers  
and family members**

**You may have heard people speaking about children's rights without being sure what this really means.**

**This booklet helps explain what children's rights are and provides information for parents, carers and family members.**



# Why is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) important for parents, carers and family members?

Everybody has rights, including children.

Rights make sure we are all treated fairly and can reach our full potential.

Children have additional rights to adults.

This is because children need extra protection and don't have the independence we do.

Parents, carers and other adults can support children to make sure their rights are being respected.

As a parent, carer or family member, we can speak up for our children and make sure their rights are being met. We do this every day, even when we don't know it. For example when we chase up a medical appointment for our child or when we talk to teachers about how to support our child's access to learning.

The UNCRC sets out the rights and freedoms that children can expect to have and always puts the best interests of the child first.

The UNCRC is not an additional ask or something to give parents, carers and family members more to do. It provides you with the language to support your child whether at school, the doctors, your child's nursery, or anywhere else.



Children's rights aren't new. The Scottish Government, your local authority and other bodies providing public services, already take a children's rights approach in their work. This is done through initiatives like the Baby Box, free-school meals, and the Scottish Child Payment.

## What are children's rights and what is the UNCRC?

The UNCRC is an internationally agreed document. It recognises the importance of children's rights and freedoms.

The UNCRC is split up into lots of different parts, called articles. Each article sets out the different rights children have.

These articles say things like:

- Children should not be discriminated against.
- Children have a right to life.
- Children have a right to education.
- Children have a right to play.
- Children can have a say in matters that affect them and their views should be taken into account.
- The decisions made about children should be in their best interests.

Children are learning about these rights in school. The more we as parents, carers and family members know about them, the easier it is for us to work together with our children to ensure their rights are being respected and protected.

# Things to know about the UNCRC and children's rights in Scotland

- **Every child has the same rights, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status.**
- **Children do not need to earn their rights and the rights do not come with responsibilities.**
- The UNCRC says that governments have to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.
- People in authority should think about children's rights when making decisions that affect them.
- The UNCRC says the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all decisions and actions that affect children.
- The UNCRC recognises the important role played by parents, carers and family members in ensuring children grow up healthy, happy and safe.
- All children should have a right to express their views in matters affecting them and for their views to be taken into account.
- Scotland has a Children and Young People's Commissioner whose job it is to protect and promote children's rights in Scotland.
- There will be support for children and their representatives to raise concerns if their rights are not being respected.

# Parents, carers and family members and the UNCRC

The UNCRC is not something for you to be worried about. It recognises your important role as a parent, carer or family member to support your child's best interests, defend their rights and speak up for them.

## What happens if my child's rights are not respected?

If you feel your child's rights have not been respected or they are at risk of being breached, there are ways to protect them now.

- You could get a Children's Advocacy Worker to support your child at [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk) They will help your child to share their needs and views, so they are listened to in decisions which affect their lives. An advocacy worker does not make choices for your child but works with them to help them make their own choice and support their rights.
- The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland also has resources on their website ([www.cyPCS.org.uk](http://www.cyPCS.org.uk)) about what to do if you feel your child's rights are being breached.

## Where to learn more about children's rights for parents, carers and family members

Visit the Parent Club website for up-to-date information on what parents, carers and family members should know about children's rights and the UNCRC. You can also read some real-life case studies at [www.ParentClub.Scot](http://www.ParentClub.Scot)

You can read a simple summary of the UNCRC or the full version:  
[www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/](http://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/)

Learn more about each right on the Children and Young people's  
Commissioner Scotland page.

[www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/articles/](http://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/articles/)



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