

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS BACKGROUND INFORMATION



June 2018

Human Rights Framework

In 1989 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC, ratified by every UN member state apart from the United States, sets out the protections, provisions and opportunities to participate that should be available to all children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as any person below the age of 18. Whilst children have the same general rights as adults, the UNCRC provides an additional human rights legal framework for the provision and protection of children's rights, recognising that children need empowerment to realise their rights and governments need to respect and fulfil these rights.

UNCRC Rights

There are 54 articles in the UNCRC. 1 – 42 lay out the rights all children should enjoy and 43-54 explain how adults and governments should work together to ensure these rights are realised. The three Ps are often used to refer to the types of rights laid out in the UNCRC:

- **Protection** rights (e.g. from violence, from sexual exploitation)
- **Provision** rights (e.g. health care, of education)
- **Participation** rights (e.g. the child having a say in decisions affecting them, freedom of religion)

UNCRC Principles

The UNCRC has four fundamental principles:

1. Non-discrimination

Q. If we don't have discrimination, what do we have?

A. *Equality. Children's rights belong to ALL children.*

2. Best interests of the child

Q. Which adults are involved in looking after the best interests of a child?

A. *Teachers, doctors, police officers, parents, etc. Every child is different. People who work with children should take into account what is best for each child.*

3. Participation

Q: What activities is it important for children to take part in?

A: *Education, play, decision making: When a decision is being made about them, children have the right to have their opinion listened to and considered.*

4. Survival, development and protection

Q: What do children need to grow? To be safe? To be healthy?

A: *Food, security, a home, water, etc. Children have the right to be safe, healthy and live a full life.*

The full text for the four principles is Article 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the CRC.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS BACKGROUND INFORMATION



June 2018

The UK and the UNCRC

In December 1991, the UK ratified the UNCRC. This means the UK government has agreed to be legally bound by the terms of the UNCRC, and, therefore, **The UK Government** (and the governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) should respect, protect and fulfil children's rights when making decisions, laws and policies.

The UK and Optional Protocols

There are a number of optional protocols to the UNCRC. These are later additions which are optional for states to join or not.

- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Opened for ratification in 2000. Ratified by the UK in 2003.
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Opened for ratification in 2000. Ratified by the UK in 2009.
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. Opened for ratification in 2011. The UK has taken no action to ratify.

Status of ratification for all countries can be found here: <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>

UK Legislation

Every five years the UK Government reports to a United Nations Committee of children's rights experts who monitor and report on whether the rights in the CRC are being respected, protected and fulfilled here in the UK. Here you can read the concluding comments from the 2016 observations:

<http://www.crae.org.uk/publications-resources/un-crc-committees-concluding-observations-2016/>

Amnesty's Position

Amnesty believes that:

- Children belong to a social group that is a permanent part of society.
- Childhood is constructed in very different ways in various times and places.
- Children frequently have their rights violated and their rights are not being adequately protected by responsible bodies.

Amnesty understand that children can, and do, experience oppression

- Amnesty's vision is a world where all children are free from these oppressions, a world where all people are free from all forms of oppression.
- Amnesty International believe that ALL people should be able to enjoy ALL their human rights and we do everything we can to make this happen.

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June 2018

Human Rights Education

What is Human Rights Education?

Human rights education is a process that anyone, anywhere can undertake at any age to learn about their own human rights -- and the rights of others -- and how to claim them. It empowers people to develop the skills and attitudes to promote equality, dignity and respect in their own communities, societies and worldwide.

Who has a right to Human Rights Education?

Everyone has the right to know, seek and receive information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms and should have access to human rights education and training regardless of their age.

We believe people of every age must have a meaningful and continuous say in ensuring the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Why do we need Human Rights Education?

Human rights education empowers people to claim their rights. It ensures that individuals in positions of power know their responsibilities. It builds the strength of the human rights movement by connecting people based on their values and empowering them to take part in promoting human rights in their own communities, societies and worldwide.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training acknowledge the fundamental importance of human rights education and training in contributing to the promotion, protection and effective realization of all human rights.

How does Human Rights Education empower children?

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance and that children should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that they can fully assume their responsibilities within the community.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child includes the right for children to know about their rights and to express their views in decisions that affect them.

Therefore, Human Rights Education is necessary to children and it also empowers them, providing them the knowledge they need to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.

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June 2018

Useful Links

Amnesty International UK's Children's Human Rights Network

Amnesty International UK campaigns on behalf of children all around the world.

Join the network:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/join-our-childrens-human-rights-network>

Twitter:

https://twitter.com/AmnestyUK_CHRN

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/AmnestyInternational.ChildrensHumanRights>

Read the blog:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/childrens-human-rights-network-blog>

Get in touch for further information:

childrensnetwork@amnesty.org.uk

UNICEF

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/>

Save the Children

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/child-rights>

KidsRights Index

<http://kidsrightsindex.org/>

NSPCC

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

Coram

<http://www.coram.org.uk/>

The Children's Commissioners of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Northern Ireland: <http://www.niccy.org/>

England:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/>

Wales: <http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/>

Scotland: <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/>

Consortium for Street Children

<http://streetchildren.org/>

Child Rights International Network (CRIN)

<https://www.crin.org/>

Committee on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

Railway Children

<https://www.railwaychildren.org.uk>

Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)

<http://www.crae.org.uk/>

Just for Kids Law

<http://www.justforkidslaw.org/>

Project for the Registration of Children for British Citizens (PRCBC)

<https://prcbc.wordpress.com/>