

8th UNCRC Programme Update

Improving Outcomes
for Children and
Young People in Scotland



The Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Introduction

Welcome to the eighth Children's Rights Unit update. It has now been over one year since the commencement of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and in that time, we've made important progress in placing children's rights at the heart of decision-making in Scotland.

Over the first year of the UNCRC Act, we saw public authorities and others take meaningful steps to further embed children's rights in policy and practice. Public authorities across Scotland are listening closely to children and young people to inform the improvement of services.

Many thanks to all those who go above and beyond, demonstrating leadership and dedication in championing children's rights. We are especially grateful to children and young people whose voices continue to shape our implementation journey. Their experiences, creativity and commitment are driving change.

We remain steadfast in our ambition to make children's rights real in everyday life, and look forward to building on the strong foundations, built through collective effort, in the months and years to come. We are committed to ensuring that every child in Scotland grows up feeling loved, safe, respected, and heard.



Introduction

The [Children's Human Rights page](#) on the Scottish Government website includes links to a range of resources that will help public authorities implement a children's human rights approach. This includes the [Children's Rights Skills and Knowledge Framework](#) which has been designed to support training for individual workers who want to build or reflect on their children's rights knowledge and take a children's human rights approach to their practice.

If you have any questions about the newsletter content, themes you would like covered in future issues or content you would like to contribute to highlight how your organisation has been taking a children's human rights approach, please email us at UNCRCIncorporation@gov.scot



About the Act / Updates on amendments

The Children (Withdrawal from Religious Education and Amendment of UNCRC Compatibility Duty) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on Wednesday 30 April. The bill is currently being considered at Stage 1.

This is a narrowly focussed Bill with two purposes:

- Amending the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to require that pupils' views are considered when parents are exercising their right to withdraw their child from Religious Observance and Religious and Moral Education in schools in order to provide clarity and align legislation with existing non-statutory guidance.
- Amending the UNCRC Act to add an exemption to the Section 6 compatibility duty in the UNCRC Act, in circumstances where a public authority has to act incompatibly with UNCRC requirements in order to fulfil duties in Scottish Parliament derived legislation.

[Further information on the Bill](#) and the [Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment](#) are also available.



Annual Executive Team takeover meeting with children and young people

This year's annual Scottish Government Executive Team takeover meeting took place in June, led by 15 children and young people. The purpose of this annual meeting is to demonstrate commitment, at the highest official level of government, to meaningful engagement with children and young people on issues that matter most to them, with the aim of improving development and implementation of policy, legislation and delivery. The children and young people and Scottish Government have been working on the same six Calls to Action since June 2023.

From young people:

- Invest in and protect youth work services
- End gender based violence
- Increase mental health training and support

From children:

- Climate crisis education
- Vaping
- Bullying and mental health in schools

The meeting was considered a success by both the children and young people and the Executive Team, who particularly enjoyed the garden room that Children's Parliament had created to ensure their space was child friendly. The 6 issues will continue to be raised by the children and young people and addressed by the Scottish Government at the Annual Cabinet Takeover in November before a new six are identified in early [2026](#).



'The Children are Now' Art Exhibition

Children's Parliament is working in collaboration with the Talbot Rice Gallery, in Edinburgh, on their upcoming exhibition '[The Children are Now](#).' The rebranding of the well-trodden phrase 'the Children are the Future', acknowledges that children are here and now, and they should be considered some of the most powerful world-builders among us.

The Children's Parliament's Child Human Rights Defenders have worked with artists Bob and Roberta Smith to create art that drives change and focuses on the three Calls to Action they have raised with the Scottish Government's Executive Team and Scottish Cabinet: climate crisis education, mental health and bullying in schools and vaping. The exhibition opens on 25th October 2025 and runs until the 7th February 2026.



Children and young people's Calls to Action

There has been significant progress on the Calls to Action brought by children and young people to the Scottish Government over the last 12 months:

To End gender based violence, The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Unit, proposed that in the run up to the global movement of [16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence](#), Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) and young women from other organisations debate the issue and arrive at a motion. The motion, 'Empowering young people's voices in tackling violence against women and girls,' was debated in parliament in December 2024. Building on this work, the team wanted to form a Youth Board that would sit as part of the overall Equally Safe strategy governance structure, to inform the [Equally Safe Delivery Plan](#). The team are currently in direct conversation with SYP and other youth organisations to help deliver this work.

The Vaping Call to Action demonstrates a strong example of collaboration between children and the Scottish Government policy team. The Tobacco, Nicotine and Gambling Team and Members of the Children's Parliament (MCPs) have met twice. At the first meeting the MCPs outlined their requests and the policy team shared information about the UK-wide Tobacco and Vapes Bill. At the second meeting the policy teams presented back to the MCPs on how their ideas were represented in the Bill. The MCPs reported a feeling of being listened to and were pleased by the content of the Bill. The children reflected on the Bill and have expressed to the policy team that there are three areas they want to take forward. They are keen to ensure voices of children are included in the ongoing work.



Support for Public Authorities

Pathways resource development

The Children's Rights Unit has developed guidance to support children and young people to share their views, raise concerns and make complaints when they feel their rights are not being respected by a public service. Working in collaboration with Barnardo's Scotland we engaged with children and young people to ensure the web content meets their needs and preferences. The groups also provided invaluable insight into how the guidance could reach other children and young people.

The guidance is made up of two posters and web content specifically aimed at children and young people. Stakeholders are encouraged to link to this [new guidance](#) and a more accessible version for young people on the Young Scot [Activate Your Rights](#) webpage where appropriate, and to contact the Children's Rights Unit at childrensrightsandparticipation@gov.scot to request digital versions of the posters. We are also developing a suite of other resources to support the public service workforce and parents/ carers/ families to know about and understand the resource, support it and feel confident to engage with children and young people on this matter.



UNCRC awareness raising with parents, carers and families

Awareness raising of UNCRC with parents, carers and families continues to be a high priority. Data from surveys from [UNICEF UK](#) and [Young Scot](#) suggests that children and young people have a high understanding of their rights and UNCRC. However, a [report](#) from Fathers Network Scotland suggests some parents do not have the same knowledge.

The Children's Rights Unit, working alongside Parent Club and supported by the UNCRC Awareness Raising network and parenting organisations, updated and refreshed the [Children's Rights pages](#) on Parent Club. New pages were added, including a page on supporting parents to talk about rights with their child and one with more detail on the UNCRC articles. There was social media activity with 6 posts focusing on different articles, driving parents to the new website. Data suggests this has been successful. The number of views to the website in the month before the launch was 365. The month after the launch was 623, up 71%. Users of the page increased from 237 to 430 (81%).



Children and Young People's Participation Framework Agreement

In early 2024 the Children's Rights Unit established a procurement Framework Agreement to enable policy teams across the Scottish Government to commission services to support their engagement with children and young people. The Children and Young People's Participation Framework Agreement facilitates collaboration with contractors that have the skills and expertise required to design and deliver bespoke, high-quality participation activities.

Framework organisations are able to facilitate engagement with a broad range of children and young people including those whose rights are most at risk. Seven engagement projects have taken place through the Framework ranging from collaboration with children and young people on climate action to seeking their views around what they would want to see included as commitments in the Children's Rights Scheme.

Executive Agencies will soon be able to commission services from Framework suppliers to support their meaningful engagement with children and young people. This should be concluded shortly and we are currently carrying out implementation work to support this development.



UNCRC Innovation Fund project: Argyll and Bute Council's accessible UNCRC plan

Working with [Listen, Think, Draw](#), Argyll and Bute Council created an illustrated UNCRC plan to improve accessibility.

The council had previously worked with the company to produce an illustrated Child Poverty Action Plan and found that this was a useful tool in engaging children and young people in discussion around the plan. Adults also appreciated the summarised format, as they did not have to digest a lengthy document. Some schools had also used this format for School Improvement Plans, meaning that pupils were already familiar with the approach.

The council were successful in securing funding from the Scottish Government's UNCRC Innovation Fund. This financed the production of the illustration and the cost of producing A4 poster versions and A5 postcard versions of the plan.

What has changed as a result of the work?

The council has increased awareness of the UNCRC plan with a range of stakeholders, most importantly with children and young people. Although it was developed with primary and secondary aged pupils, Early Learning Centres have requested copies as practitioners have found it a useful visual tool to engage pre-5 children in relation to their rights. The council has been able to increase the visibility of this work and how rights are connected to so many other areas of improvement activity within the local authority.



Engagement with children and young people

Children and young people's views informed the work that was contained within the full UNCRC plan and report. The council engaged children and young people in the illustrated UNCRC Plan by reaching out to Rights Respecting Schools and working with Argyll and Bute Youth Voice Group. Given that the plan was for UNCRC, staff wanted to ensure they engaged with groups of pupils that were well informed on their rights through the Rights Respecting Schools Awards. This mainly involved primary schools. The Youth Voice Group had more varied knowledge of rights and helped to provide a secondary school age perspective. Staff ensured they had mainland and island representation.

The final illustration was shared first with those involved in creating it to ensure that they felt their views had been taken into account. The project team was also keen to ensure to close the "you said.. we did" loop. Prints and postcards were produced and shared across schools and partner agencies within Argyll and Bute. The postcards have allowed children and young people to share their rights with others.

Challenges

The timing of the work was challenging as it was towards the end of exam leave. Staff initially worked with primary pupils to receive initial responses before then seeking the views of secondary pupils. This was mainly undertaken via virtual meets to ensure a spread of opinions from across the local authority. The other challenge faced was co-ordinating availability. Separate sessions were organised to brief the illustrator. This helped children and young people to be open about how they felt things could improve without offending anyone.

Creating an open atmosphere for children and young people to be critical was important. They provided suggestions about what areas of the plan had been overlooked that were important to them as well as how to illustrate key priorities better so that they understood what it meant. They were not afraid to challenge.

This approach has financial implications and there is not currently the skill set within the council to capture documents and reports in this way. Therefore, budgets need to be considered accordingly.



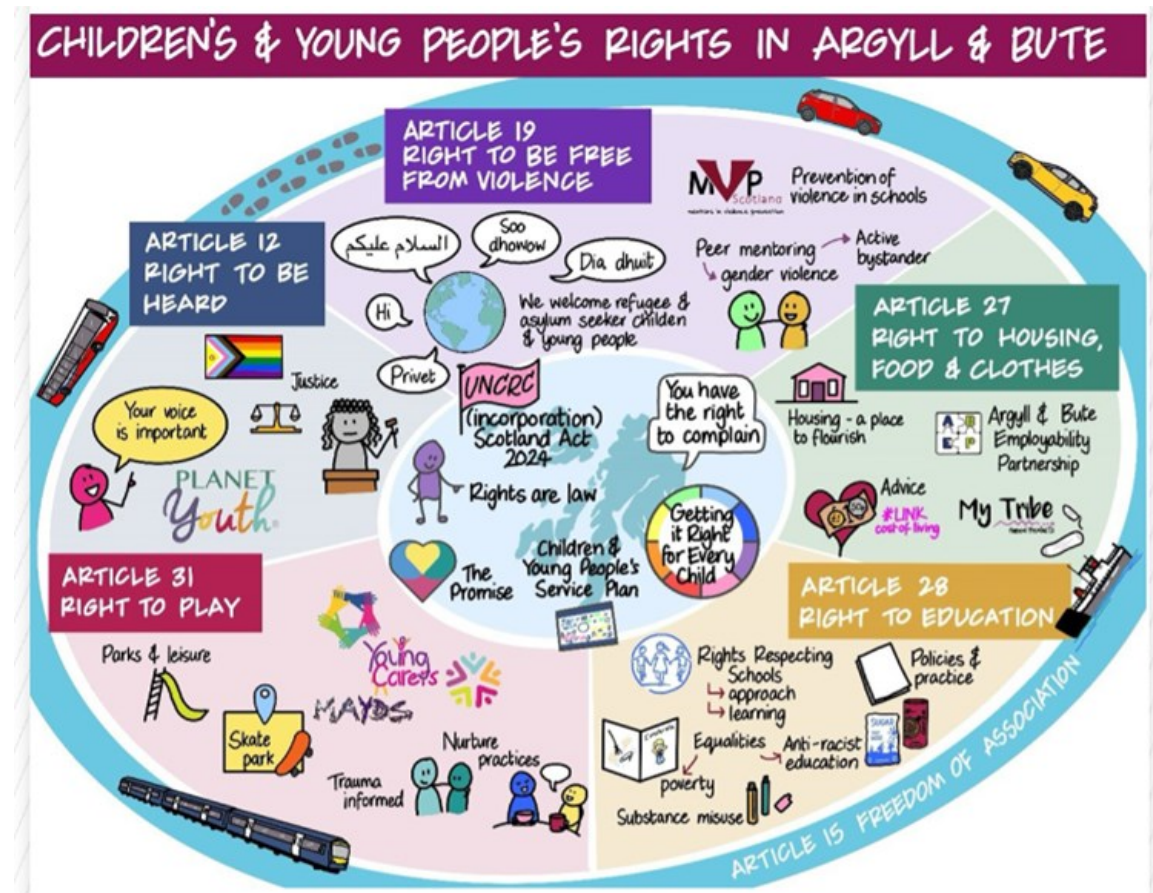
Lessons learned

The council is still at the earlier stages of finding appropriate ways to report to children and young people with regards to matters that affect them. Solutions will be varied and will evolve overtime. By directly engaging with children and young people to find the solutions, staff are already beginning that process of reporting back. It is important to remember that often child friendly documents are not only more accessible to children and young people but to all communities.

The processes in itself was important. It highlighted priorities for children and young people that had been previously overlooked or not made prominent enough.

Outcome and Impact

Pupils fed back that they could see their suggestions within the final design. The design has been shared through virtual meetings and in person events. It is always positively received. The council are still at the early stages of using it and will need to evaluate the reach and understanding of the illustration once it has been used in a range of settings.



NHS Education for Scotland—UNCRC Virtual Conference

The Women, Children, Young People and Families (WCYPF) team at NHS Education for Scotland (NES) are delighted to be hosting the UNCRC Virtual Conference, Embedding Children's Rights across NHS Scotland: shared experiences of implementing the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024.

Over a year after the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law, this conference offers a timely opportunity to explore how NHS Scotland is implementing the UNCRC Act across all services and settings.

Attendees will be invited to reflect on their own practice and consider how they can contribute to a culture that respects and promotes the rights and voices of children and young people

Date: Wednesday 26 November 2025

Time: 09:15 to 16:30

Platform: Microsoft Teams Webinar

Target Audience: Scotland's Health and Social Care Workforce

Register now for further information and to obtain the joining link: <https://forms.office.com/e/Zcg3FQM8PQ>



New online resource replacing the previous Common Core

[Supporting Scotland's Children: Core Knowledge and Values](#) replaces the previous [Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the "Children's Workforce" in Scotland](#). This new online resource, sets out the essential knowledge and values that everyone working or volunteering with babies, children, young people and families should share, including children's rights, wellbeing, safeguarding and partnership working.

Hosted by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) our hope is that the resource will be used widely across services, from education and health to social work and the third sector.

The resource has been refreshed to reflect current policy priorities including Getting It Right For Every Child, The Promise, and UNCRC implementation, and is intended as a practical tool for induction, training, and ongoing learning across all sectors. This resource will be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis to reflect any changes in policy.