

Inclusive communication training

Aberdeen City Council has had a dedicated children's social work Rights Service for more than 30 years, which is one of the ways the council promotes human rights practice. The service ethos is grounded in the UNCRC. Its remit is to provide independent, relational, trauma-informed advocacy, guidance, and support to Aberdeen children, young people, and young adults, aged zero to 26 years old, who are care experienced or are/have been involved in child protection processes, wherever they live.

Inclusive communication means providing opportunities for children and young people to participate in a way that everyone can engage with and understand. Inclusive communication helps build children and young people's awareness of opportunities, events, and available services. It supports them to build relationships, to express themselves, and to receive information in a way that suits their communication needs and preferences. Inclusive communication is especially needed for children and young people who might be assumed unable to participate because they are unable to talk or have not yet learned to talk.

A priority area for the service is to raise awareness and promote rights by providing direct learning opportunities that translate rights into practice. This need was identified through referral discussion or consultation, where workers outlined their motivation to build upon their inclusive communication knowledge, skills, confidence, and ability to apply this in practice. Both Rights Officers, along with children's social work colleagues, one from fieldwork services and one from residential childcare, came together to plan and deliver an Inclusive Communication Workshop. This collaboration underlines that inclusive communication is for all workers.

Delivering training

The workshop is in-person, delivered four times a year for up to 12 participants and runs for three hours. There is no advanced learning required, and each session is advertised for booking by workers. The workshop combines theoretical input, experiential, and reflective learning, and the opportunity, in a safe space, to play, to practise, and try out a range of different approaches and materials. Each participant is provided with an inclusive communication 'starter pack' which includes various sensory materials like fidget toys and playdough, details of useful websites, and a UNCRC booklet. The aim of the pack is to support workers to consolidate their learning and provide a basic toolkit to build on.

Building on the learning

A QR code leading to an evaluation form is given at the end of the training to gather feedback which is valuable in refining the training. Each participant receives a certificate and is added to a Microsoft Teams channel. They are encouraged to use this space to share any research materials and practical tools, to look for new ideas, and to share good practice.

Children's rights learning outcomes

By having training in inclusive communication, Aberdeen City Council is supporting workers with training to learn and develop their children's human rights approach. The training also includes supporting children and young people to access their rights equally, with a focus on those children and young people whose rights are at risk, taking children and young people's views into account in decisions that affect them, and ensuring that work and decisions are effectively communicated as part of accountable practice.

