



together

Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights

State of
Children's
Rights in
Scotland
2026

Child-friendly
version



Hello!

We are Emily, Mary, Maisie, Christina and Carly.



We work for Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights). Together is a charity that wants to make things better for children.

We've been gathering stories of how children, young people, and adults in Scotland have been working together to protect children's rights.



What are children's rights?

Children's rights are all about the things you need to grow up happy, healthy and safe. They are written down in a document called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (or 'UNCRC' for short). The UNCRC explains what adults should do to protect children's rights.





What is the UNCRC Act?

The Scottish Government decided to make children's rights part of the law, making them stronger for children in Scotland. This new law is called the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 (or 'the UNCRC Act' for short).

The Scottish Government has to follow the new law. Lots of other adults do too – like teachers, doctors, social workers and people who work for the council. The law says these people must make sure their decisions and actions respect the rights of babies, children and young people. It also says that a child can go to court if they think their rights haven't been respected, and that adults can help them to do this. A judge might help to put things right.

Adults should take a 'children's human rights approach' in the way they work. This will make things better for children and also help adults to follow the law.



What is a children's human rights approach?

A children's human rights approach is a way to make sure that every child is treated fairly, listened to, and grows up happy, healthy and safe. It says that adults should think about five things:

- **Embedding** – always think about children's rights when making decisions.
- **Equality and non-discrimination** – make sure everyone is treated fairly and no one is left out.
- **Empowerment** – help children understand their rights and how to use them.
- **Participation** – make sure children can share their views and listen to them.
- **Accountability** – keep any promises made to children and make it easy for children to complain if they are not kept.

We gathered lots of stories about what adults are already doing to protect children's rights. We hope this will help other adults to do these things too.



Stories of a children's human rights approach in action



Embedding

Adults should always think about how their plans and actions might impact children. They should ask themselves 'will this be good for children?' before they decide to do anything.



What does this look like?

- Adults checking their plans to make sure they won't unfairly impact children.
- Rules and laws being looked at often to make sure they are still good for children.
- Adults using children's rights to plan their work.



What we learnt from stories about embedding in action

Organisations across Scotland are already doing lots of things to put this into action. Their stories show us that:

Decisions are all different, so adults need to think about each one carefully. Filling in the same form or asking the same questions might not work for everything.

- (Have a look at stories from NHS Lothian, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, Flexible Childcare Services Scotland, Barnardo's Scotland, Highland Council and Families Outside).

Organisations that work together can learn from each other. These new ideas can help make things better for children. Adults should think about how children can be involved in choosing who they work with.

- (Have a look at stories from Families Outside, Flexible Childcare Services Scotland, National Day Nurseries Association, Inspiring Scotland, Perth and Kinross Council and Skills Development Scotland).

Everyone should know about children's rights. This includes adults and children. Children should be involved in making sure everyone knows about children's rights.

Organisations should make sure staff learn all about children's rights and how to respect the dignity of babies, children and young people.

- (Have a look at stories from NHS Grampian and Dumfries and Galloway Council).



Read the case studies here!



Equality and non-discrimination

Adults should make sure that every child is treated kindly and given the same chance to do well no matter who they are. Everyone should be treated fairly no matter their age including babies, children and young people. No one should feel left out.



What does this look like?

- Adults treat all children fairly, with dignity and respect.
- Adults learn about different children's needs so that they can help everyone.
- Adults should record information on unfair situations so that changes can be made.



What we learnt from stories of equality and non-discrimination in action

Organisations across Scotland are already doing lots of things to put this into action. Their stories show us that:

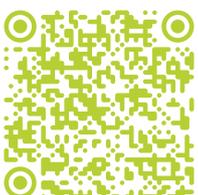
Adults should pay attention so that they notice when some children have harder lives or are facing extra challenges. They should make sure these children get the support they need so they have all their rights.

- (Have a look at the stories from Children First, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and Harneny Education Trust).

Some children's rights are more at risk. Adults should make sure they can come together, share their experiences and be themselves. Adults should make sure they can take part in decisions.

- (Have a look at stories from Falkirk Council, Inverclyde Council Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, Children and Young People's Centre for Justice, Intercultural Youth Scotland, LGBT Youth Scotland and Borders Additional Needs Group)

Adults should take time to understand that children have different lives and experiences. They might need special training to learn how to listen to all children – including babies.



[Read the case studies here!](#)



Empowerment

Adults should support children to understand what their rights are. This helps children to make their own choices and ask for help when they need it. Adults should also ‘share power’ with children so that they can have a say on things that affect them.



What does this look like?

- Making sure children have information about their rights that’s easy to understand.
- Creating safe places where children can talk about their rights.
- Understanding that a child’s needs change as they get older and supporting them along the way.



What we learnt from stories of equality and non-discrimination in action

Organisations across Scotland are already doing lots of things to put this into action. Their stories show us that:

Information about children’s rights needs to be easy for children to understand. We saw ideas like using simple words, keeping things short, and using pictures and videos.

- (Have a look at stories from Dumfries and Galloway Council, Highland Council, Our Hearings Our Voice, Play Scotland and Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration)

Information works best when it is shared in a way that suits each child. Adults need to understand the different needs of babies, children and young people.

- (Have a look at stories from Lochend Imagine Care and Our Hearings Our Voice)

Children might need help to understand their rights and share their views. Children should be able to share their views in whatever way works best for them, whether it’s speaking, drawing or anything else.

- (Have a look at stories from Argyll and Bute Council, NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Circle Scotland and Scottish Families Affected by Drugs and Alcohol)

It’s really important to make sure children have chances to get involved. They should get the support they need to stand up for their rights and the rights of other children.

- (Have a look at stories from Children First and Children’s Parliament)



Read the case studies here!



Participation

Adults should make sure children can have a say about the things that affect them. Adults should take children's ideas seriously and think about them when they are making decisions.



What does this look like?

- Supporting children to help adults in deciding what should be done.
- Creating safe and fun places for children to share their ideas.
- Adults telling children what happened because of their ideas and how they helped.



What we learnt from stories of participation in action

Organisations across Scotland are already doing lots of things to put this into action. Their stories show us that:

There are lots of different ways to support babies, children and young people to share their views.

- (Have a look at stories from Starcatchers and Children and Young People's Centre for Justice)

Some children might need extra help to share their views – for example if they don't like to talk or can't talk. It's important that they get this help.

It's important that children feel comfortable and safe. Adults can help by learning about what children need, being open and honest, making sure information is easy to understand, and letting children know it's okay to stop at any time. This helps children decide if they want to take part.

- (Have a look at stories from Forces Children Scotland, Our Hearings Our Voice, Aberdeen City Council, Children and Young People's Centre for Justice, Children First and Education Scotland)

Children should be able to share their views in whatever way works best for them, whether it's speaking, drawing or anything else. They should always be told what happens with their ideas, and adults should explain honestly why decisions were made, even if the child doesn't agree.

- (Have a look at stories from PLUS (Forth Valley) Limited, Forces Children Scotland, A Place in Childhood and Shetland Council)



Read the case studies here!



Accountability

Adults should keep the promises they make to children. If a promise is broken, or something goes wrong, adults should make sure children can get help and ask questions so the problem can be fixed.



What does this look like?

- Adults sharing information about the work they are doing so that children can speak up if something is happening that affects their rights.
- Children knowing how to give feedback or say when something is not right.
- Children having adults who will support them and speak up when something is wrong.



What we learnt from stories of accountability in action

Organisations across Scotland are already doing lots of things to put this into action. Their stories show us that:

Some organisations have been given extra powers to help protect children's rights – like going to court and speaking up for children.

- (Have a look at stories from Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, JustRight Scotland and Clan Childlaw)

Organisations should keep checking if their decisions are good for children, and fix anything that isn't working.

- (Have a look at the story from Highland Community Planning Partnership).

Children need easy and safe ways to share their thoughts. They often need different ways than adults to talk about their experiences and give feedback.

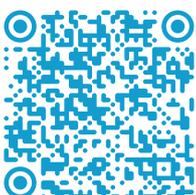
- (Have a look at the story from Care Opinion)

When adults listen carefully to children, it can help improve services like schools and hospitals.

- (Have a look at stories from Children's Hearings Scotland, Imagine and Public Health Scotland)

Children should have ways to give feedback themselves and have someone available that can speak up for them.

- (Have a look at the story from the Care Inspectorate)



[Read the case studies here!](#)

All five ways of working need each other to help make sure organisations are helping children be happy, healthy, loved and safe.



Share your views!

We'd love to know what you think about this report.

Scan the QR code to share your views or email us at:

info@togetherscotland.org.uk.

