

Summary for children and young people

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding Observations

On the combined sixth and seventh reports of the
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

August 2023

YOUTH@CLC

children's law centre

About this summary

In May 2023, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child examined the UK government on how well they are upholding children's rights.

The UN Committee have now published their 'Concluding Observations', which outlines a series of recommendations that the government should take forward to ensure children's rights are a lived reality for all children.

This is a summary of some of the recommendations. It is not a full list. For the full list, please download the Concluding Observations, or scan the QR code below.



Recommendations Include



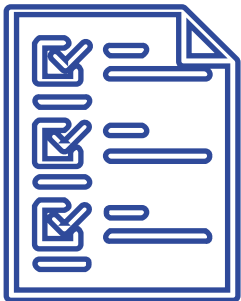
Incorporate the UNCRC

The rights of children and young people, as laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) should be directly included in our laws in Northern Ireland.



Bill of Rights

There should be a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, something promised as part of the Good Friday Agreement, but never delivered.



Child Rights Action Plan

There should be an action plan and resources to deliver children's rights.



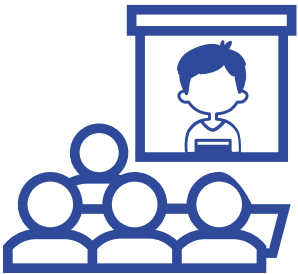
Stop the Cuts

The current NI budget, which will require cuts to services for children and young people, should be withdrawn and a new one drawn up which protects children's rights.



Promote the UNCRC

Everyone should know about children's rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Child Rights Training

All people working with children should be trained in children's rights.



Child Friendly Complaints

There should be an independent child friendly complaints process put in place in schools and other places to report violence, abuse, discrimination and other ways that children's rights have been violated or not complied with.



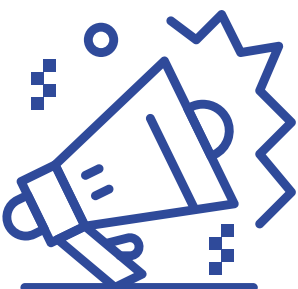
End Age Discrimination

Children and young people should not be discriminated against or negatively stereotyped on the basis of their age.



Best Interests

The best interests of children should be considered when designing new laws and policies, as well as when decisions are taken about children.



Child's Voice

All children should be able to express their views and to have their views taken into account in all decisions affecting them.



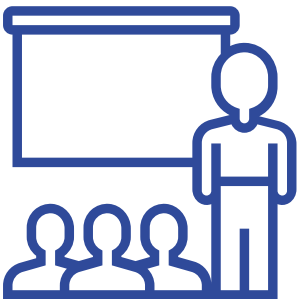
Votes at 16

The government should consider holding consultations with children on lowering the voting age to 16 years.



Equal Rights

The government must make a special effort to protect children in disadvantaged situations such as care experienced children, LGBTQI children, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, young carers, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children and Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children.



Collective Worship

Children should not have to attend collective worship in schools. All children, including those under 16 years of age, should be able to decide if they want to withdraw from religious classes without consent from their parents.



Respect Religious Diversity

There should be changes made to what is taught in school to include education on and respect for diversity of religions.



Stop and Search

Unnecessary stop and search checks by the PSNI on children and young people should be banned.



Tackle Digital Poverty

The government must continue to improve digital inclusion (both access to the internet and digital devices) for children in disadvantaged situations, and ensure children are kept safe online.



End Uses of Force on Children

The PSNI's use of harmful devices on children and young people such as spit hoods, TASERS, and plastic bullets should be banned in law. A law should be made to ban the strip searching of children and young people by the PSNI.



Disciplinary Practices

The use of solitary confinement, isolation, seclusion and restraint as a form of disciplining children should be banned in law.



Equal Protection

There should be a law to ban 'corporal punishment' (smacking) in the home to give children equal protection under the law against violence.



Child Protection

Children should be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and violence.



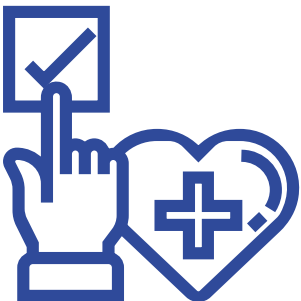
Improved Childcare

The government should allocate resources (money) for childcare services.



Parental Access

Children who have a parent in jail should be able to have contact with them, when it's in the best interests of the child.



Better Healthcare

There needs to be plans put in place to ensure that all children have access to quality health care services.



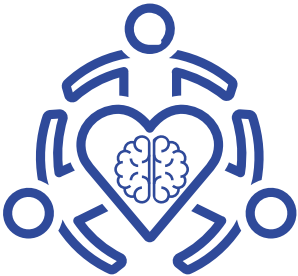
End Food Poverty

More should be done to address malnutrition, children being overweight / obese and families not being able to afford food. This includes ensuring all children have access to nutritious food and are not relying on foodbanks, as well as expanding free school meals to all children in disadvantaged situations.



Faster Access to CAMHS

Long waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for children and young people should be urgently addressed.



Community Mental Health

There should be community-based mental health services and programmes for children of all ages.



Relationship and Sex Education

There should be full, age-appropriate and evidence-based, education on sexual and reproductive health taught at school, without the possibility for schools or parents to opt out of such education.



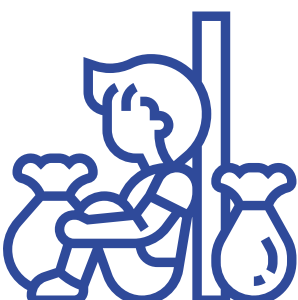
Tackle Climate Change

There should be plans put in place to address environmental protection and climate change, where children's views and needs are taken into account.



End Child Poverty

There needs to be a clear plan to end child poverty.



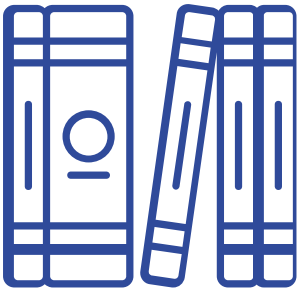
Prevent Homelessness

The government should work to address reasons why some children are homeless and increase the availability of social housing.



Equal Education

There should be work done to ensure that everyone can do well at school.



Teach Respect

Discriminatory language should be removed from textbooks, with learning materials being developed that foster respect for all.



Prevent Bullying in Schools

More should be done to tackle bullying, including cyberbullying.



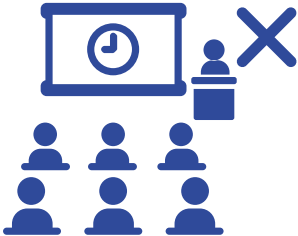
Teach Children's Rights

Children's rights should be taught at school.



Ban Restraint and Seclusion

Restraint and seclusion should not be used in any educational setting.



End the Transfer Test

There should be an end to academic selection and testing measures.



Right to Play

There should be a plan put in place by the government to ensure children have a right to rest and play, including free outdoor play.



End the Hostile Environment

The Committee were very concerned about the Illegal Migration Bill and the way the UK government treats refugee and asylum seekers. The UK Government should make sure children have the right to a nationality, the right to seek asylum and have their best interests taken into account.



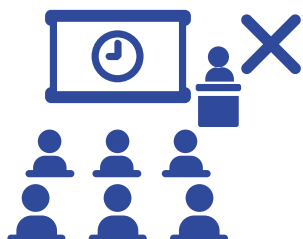
Protect Children from Trafficking

More should be done to protect and support children who have been trafficked. The Home Office should not pass laws that go against anti-trafficking laws in Northern Ireland.



Raise the Age

There should be an increase in the age of criminal responsibility (the age you can be found responsible for a crime) from 10 to at least 14. Children who have offended should be treated as children. Detaining them in custody should be the last resort.



Tackle Paramilitaries

Actions should be taken to prevent paramilitary attacks and intimidation against children. More should be done to prevent the recruitment of children for paramilitary activities.

What Next?

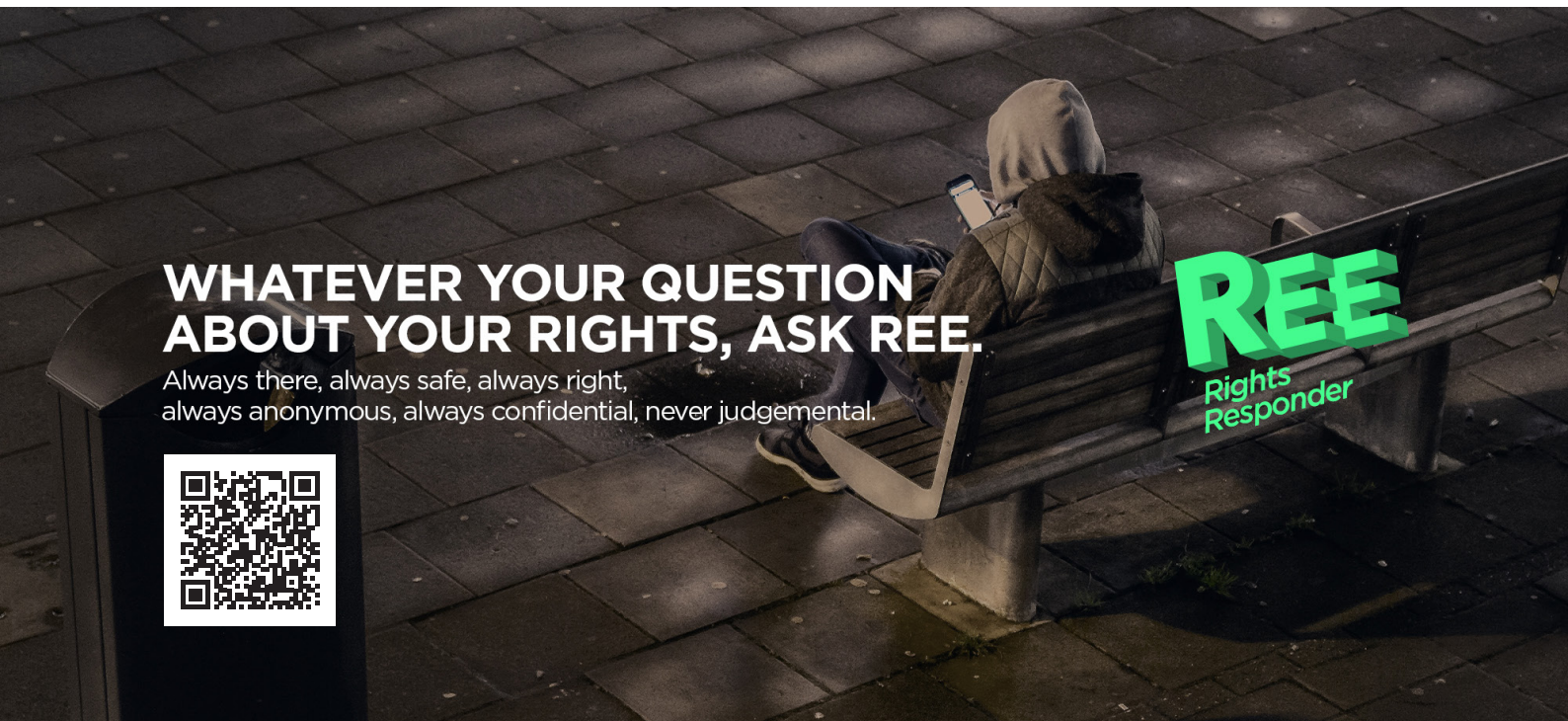
The next step will be to ensure that the government knows about these recommendations, and works to ensure that the recommendations are put into action.

**WHATEVER YOUR QUESTION
ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS, ASK REE.**

Always there, always safe, always right,
always anonymous, always confidential, never judgemental.



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