

Children's Law Centre

Change Makers

Resource for Teachers
and Youth Workers

September 2023



childrenslawcentre.org.uk



Children's Rights
Change Children's Lives

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About

This resource is designed to help children and young people learn more about the recent Concluding Observations published by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee).

The Concluding Observations were published after the Committee examined the UK Government and devolved administrations' (Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and overseas territories) record on children's rights.

The examination process is laid out as part of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UK is a signatory to the UNCRC and therefore has obligations to implement it.

In this resource, you can find information that will help explain the UNCRC, the Committee and the examination process. There are also links to further resources and some activities to help children and young people learn more about how the concepts relate to their everyday lives.



Suggested Activity 1: Rights Shopping Trolley

(10 minutes)

This resource will make a lot of reference to rights. Before getting started, it's worth making sure all children and young people know what human rights are.

Make sure children are in small groups. Provide them with worksheet 1 (found on page 13) that includes the definition of human rights and the shopping trolley.

Then ask the groups to consider, if they were shopping for rights, what rights would they want to make sure they put in their shopping trolley.

What rights would they really not want to be without?

Questions and Examples for Activity 1

- You can find examples of human rights [here](#).
- Ask the groups to compare their rights shopping trolleys and explain why they have included them in their trolley. Are there any they feel they would regret not counting?
- Ask the young people if they've heard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.
- Ask the young people if they've heard of any of the [core human rights treaties](#).

Additional Resources for Activity 1

- Children's Law Centre '[Your Rights](#)'
- UNICEF '[Know Your Rights](#)' teaching materials
- United Nations information on [What are human rights?](#)



The UNCRC

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC for short, is an international treaty. It lists commonly accepted children's rights that should be upheld by all the countries that signed up to the agreement.

The UNCRC has four main guiding principles:

Non-Discrimination (Article 2)

The government should make sure children and young people are protected against discrimination (being treated differently or unfairly) because of their age, race, religion, opinions or background.

Best Interests (Article 3)

When adults are making decisions about children and young people, they should always do what is best for them.

Survival and Development (Article 6)

The government should do as much as they can to make sure children and young people grow up happy, healthy, safe and reach their full potential.

Voice of the Child (Article 12)

Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen in decisions that affect their lives, and to have what they say taken seriously.



Suggested Activity 2: Making Rights Real

(15 minutes)

Ask the young people to work in four small groups. Hand out a worksheet (found on pages 14-17) to each group.

Under each general principle, the young people should list examples of how they could relate to experiences in young people's lives. Assign a different general principle to each group and ask each to explain the examples they have that under that particular heading.

Ask the other groups if they had anything different, before moving on to the next heading.

Useful Examples for Activity 2

Common examples of age discrimination for young people include:

- Negative stereotyping in media
- Being asked to leave shopping centres and shops
- Child free policies e.g. [this story about a swimming pool in Bangor](#)
- Children being moved on in the streets by adults such as the police, when they are doing no harm
- [Children being excluded from the Covid recovery High Street Voucher Scheme](#)

Common examples of specific groups experiencing discrimination:

- Disabled children not being provided with support to participate in play activities
- Refugees and asylum seekers, Roma, Travellers or children from minority ethnic communities being bullied in school or criticised for speaking their first language
- LGBTQ+ young people experiencing bullying in schools

Common examples of issues affecting children's survival and development include:

- Difficulty accessing counselling or mental health services
- Children with Special Educational Needs having to wait long times for assessments or additional support in school
- Difficulty accessing family support for bereaved children
- Children having to flee their home country to escape war
- Poor access to factual information around issues like drugs or Relationship and Sex Education (RSE)

Common examples of children's voices not being heard include:

- Politicians and government officials setting policies without speaking with young people to find out their views on the change
- Many young people want to see the voting age reduced to 16
- Disabled children and young people who struggle to be understood when they try to express themselves
- Social workers, teachers and judges who make decisions affecting children and young people's lives without considering the views of those children and young people



Discussion Topics for Activity 2

Direct and Indirect Discrimination

- Direct discrimination is treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others e.g. refusing to give someone a job based on the colour of their skin. A protected characteristic includes people of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation. It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of these characteristics.
- Indirect discrimination is putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage e.g. placing a classroom up a flight of stairs in school and expecting all students to be able to access it, despite some not being able to use stairs.

Did the young people include examples of both types of discrimination on their worksheet?

Adult Decision Makers

Many different types of adults make decisions impacting the lives of children and young people. This does not just include parents and guardians. Teachers, social workers, doctors, police, legal professionals and politicians all make decisions and are bound by the best interest principle.

Did the young people include these on their worksheet?



The UNCRC covers every aspect of children's lives

Protection

Protection from violence, abuse and neglect, including protection from carers, guardians and professionals, as well as the police and the government.

Civil Rights and Freedoms

Identity, expression, thoughts and the right to information.

Family Life

The right to know and be cared for by parents if it is in the child's best interests, as well as rights for adopted children and children in care.

Health and Welfare

The right to live a healthy life, including suitable healthcare and basic needs provided, as well as rights for disabled children.

Special Protection

Protection for vulnerable or marginalised groups.

Education, Leisure and Culture

The right to a school education, to play and to learn about and practice cultural traditions.

Additional Resources:

- CLC [Information on the UNCRC](#)
- QUB Centre for Children's Rights [YouTube video on the UNCRC](#)

The Concluding Observations

The UNCRC also contains Articles setting out what a government should do to ensure children's rights make a difference to children's lives. This includes making sure children and young people know about their rights and the UNCRC.

It also includes a way of checking that the government is doing all it can to carry out the commitments it signed up to. As part of this, every five or so years, any government that has signed up to the UNCRC is examined by a committee of child rights experts. These experts sit on a committee called the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

As part of the examination, the Committee collects evidence from experts in that country or region. These experts include people who work for children, but most

importantly it also includes children and young people themselves. The Committee holds an evidence session in Geneva for children and young people under 18. The children and young people tell the members where they feel the government is not carrying out its UNCRC responsibilities as it should. The Committee also holds a session where it questions officials from the government.

The Committee then produces a list of Concluding Observations. The Concluding Observations include comments on the failures of a government to fulfil their UNCRC responsibilities. It also includes recommendations on how to meet those responsibilities.

It is then expected that the government will work to implement the recommendations.

Suggested Activity 3: Presenting to the Committee

(10 minutes)

Your group of young people have been chosen to give evidence to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This will help influence the Committee's Concluding Observations.

The young people should work together to identify some of the main rights breaches they want to raise at the Committee.

They should then nominate two young people to present.

Each young person should select two general principles each and present issues relating to each. The presentations should be one or two minutes each.

You can provide the young people with the summary report of evidence submitted to the Committee in December 2022.

Additional Resources

- [Rights Here, Right Now Children and Young People's Survey](#)
- [Rights Here, Right Now Children and Young People's Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child - Summary](#)



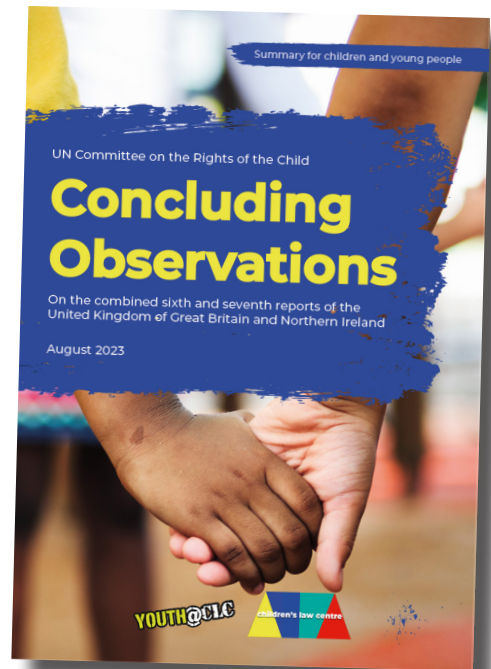
The 2023 Examination

Between 2021 - 2023, the Committee on the Rights of the Child completed the UK examination. As part of this, the Children's Law Centre (CLC) led the NGO sector in Northern Ireland in submitting evidence. This included writing major reports and presenting oral evidence in Geneva

The Children's Law Centre's youth panel, Youth@CLC, also submitted a report called 'Rights Here, Right Now'. This included research from over 1,000 children and young people. The research was collected through a survey and workshops.

A number of young people also visited Geneva to present oral evidence to The Committee.

You can download a [summary of the Concluding Observations](#).



Become a Change Maker

Suggested Activity 4: Make Your Voices Heard

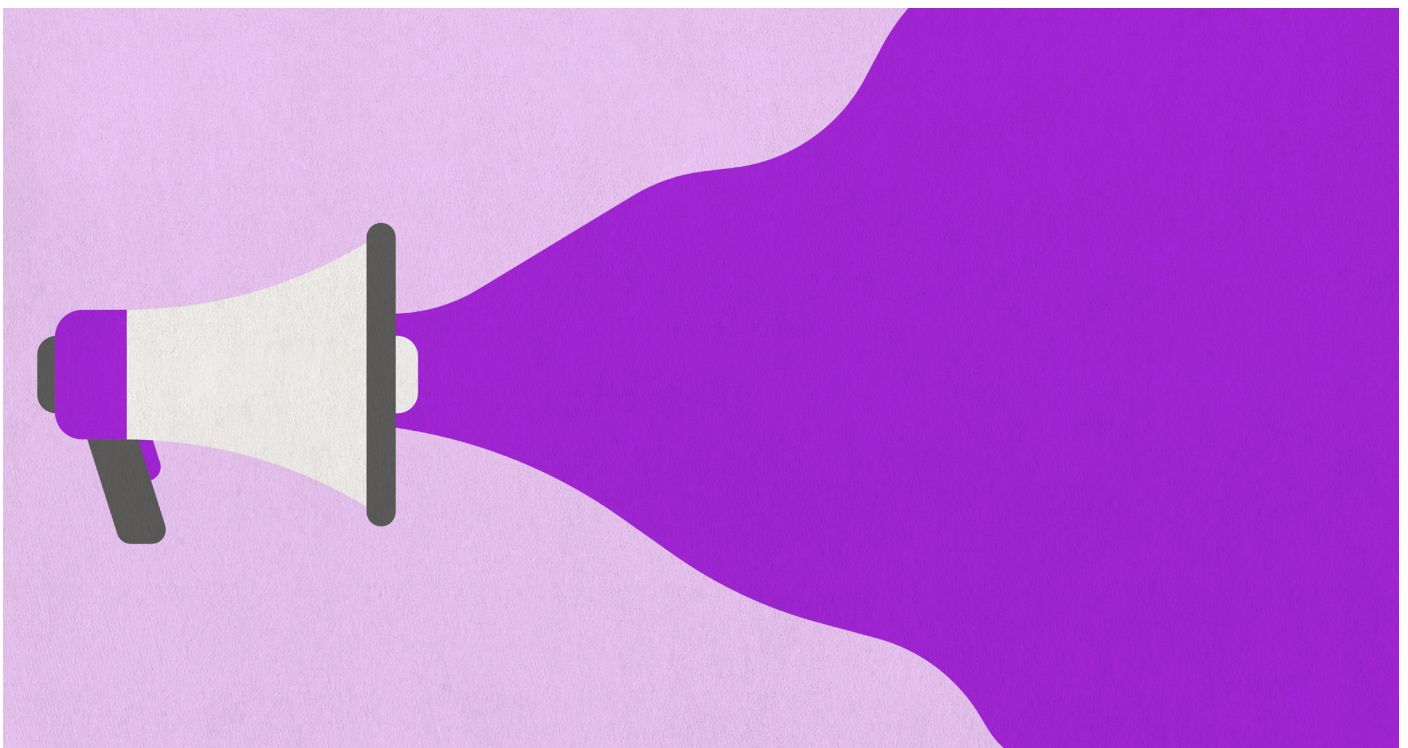
The latest Concluding Observations were published in June 2023.

Break the young people into small groups and provide them with a copy of the Concluding Observations [summary document produced by the Children's Law Centre](#).

Ask each group to pick a topic and then plan how they will raise awareness of the issue and work to ensure the relevant decision makers know their obligation and make changes to fulfil the recommendation.

Questions and Examples for Activity 4

- The groups will want to think about what outcome they want to achieve, who they should engage with to achieve the outcome, how they want to engage and what they want to say.
- Campaigns can set out to influence politicians at UK or Northern Ireland level, government officials, local councils, health trusts, the police or even their place of education.
- Do the young people think their voices are often heard? If not, what can they do to change that?



Activity 1 Worksheet: Rights Shopping Trolley

What is a Human Right?

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.

Definition from: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

Fill your shopping trolley with the rights you want to make sure are protected.



Activity 2 Worksheet (a): Making Rights Real

Non-Discrimination (Article 2)

The government should make sure children and young people are protected against discrimination (being treated differently or unfairly) because of their age, race, religion, opinions or background.

List examples of discrimination young people might experience

Activity 2 Worksheet (b): Making Rights Real

Best Interests (Article 3)

When adults are making decisions about children and young people, they should always do what is best for them.

List examples of when adults make decisions that affect young people

Activity 2 Worksheet (c): Making Rights Real

Survival and Development (Article 6)

The government should do as much as they can to make sure children and young people grow up happy, healthy, safe and reach their full potential.

List examples of things that might negatively impact a young person's survival or development - things that prevent them from becoming happy, healthy, safe and reaching their full potential

Activity 2 Worksheet (d): Making Rights Real

Voice of the Child (Article 12)

Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen in decisions that affect their lives, and to have what they say taken seriously.

List examples of when young people's opinions are not taken seriously

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REE Rights Responder
#Ask REE at reerights.com

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