

The importance of respecting the voice of the child.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the root of all UNICEF's work (UNICEF, no date). This is an international document and agreement that safeguards the human rights of children up to the age of 18. As children up to the age of 18 are regarded as one of the most vulnerable groups in society, this agreement recognises additional rights to protect them and highlights their basic human rights. This agreement identifies 54 articles in total on how all children should be treated and respected regardless of their age, ethnicity, creed, gender or ability. The UNCRC says that children up to the age of 18 should simply be viewed as a youngster national by a birth declaration yet to be treated as a subject with deference and correspondence (Invernizzi and Williams, 2008). The Welsh Government embraced the tradition as the reason for strategy making for children and youngsters in grains in 2004.

Article 3 "All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child" (Children's Rights Wales, 2016).

All practitioners have a duty of care and must work together to ensure that a child's needs are met and supported. All practitioners, including teachers, teaching assistants, ALENCO and other multi agencies such as Educational Psychologist and the Behavioural Support Community Team should attend meetings, share information and review information regularly to ensure the needs of the child are met and that the decisions are made in the best interest of the child (Children & Young People's Commissioners Scotland 2018).

Building and developing a decent connection and relationship between specialists, and the family are imperative to build up children's social, passionate prosperity and learning (Mind Matters, no date).

Article 12 "Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account" (Children's Rights Wales, 2016).

A child's age should not be an issue when it comes to decision making as a child's opinions and voice should be heard regardless of their age. According to the Welsh Government (2014), it is essential that a child's voice is valued and respected when it comes to decisions that affect them. This is important when conducting a meeting for an Individual Development Plan, which would include a One Page Profile. The child's view has an impact on the way ahead on how best to support them. According to (Helen Sanderson Associates, no date) by getting to know the child and understanding what is important to them helps build better relationships and can also help guide the practitioners in the correct direction to support their individual needs. It also allows the child to be part of the decision making process and as a result will help them reach their potential.

Article 31 “All children have a right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of activities” (Children’s Rights Wales, 2016).

(IPA, 2012) states the importance of play and the benefits it promotes with regards to physical and mental health and in some cases, it acts as a therapeutic and rehabilitative support.

Article 31 connects to Article 36 which expresses that children should be protected or shielded from any exercises that could harm their improvement in their development (Children’s Rights Wales, 2016). Practitioners should follow school policies and LEA guidelines to guarantee that all children have the freedom and the opportunity to enjoy and appreciate play, and that these developmental opportunities are not inhibited or hindered by others disruptive, troublesome behaviour.

All activities whether outdoor or indoors that are set by the practitioner should be challenging, stimulating and differentiated to support and engage pupils individual needs. This would encourage an inclusive environment and would establish a relationship between the practitioner and the pupil.

Article 16 “Children have the right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their families and their homes” (Children’s Rights Wales, 2016).

Sadly, children can be discriminated against and stereotyped due to their family background and their behaviour, this can then have an impact on how other children treat them as parents do inflict their views on their children. This unfair discrimination can result in low self-esteem and low self-confidence as well as low achievement expectations (Wilson, 2012). Article 16 states the importance of protecting children from such misconduct.

Practitioners need to follow and adhere to school policies and Government Legislation with regards to confidentiality and only share information with relevant people. Information should be kept safe and secure in accordance to the Data Protection Act 2018.

Failure to adhere to guidelines and policies will result in a breakdown in communication and lack of trust between the family and practitioners.

To conclude, as stated in the title, the child’s voice is paramount and should be at the heart of all actions. (ESTYN 2017) use the views of learners as a key source of evidence of achievement, attitudes and wellbeing. these views can also influence further lines of enquiry therefore this is a good indication of how important the rights of a child are.

The 54 articles also set a precedent and a standard for how things should be internationally, and that all children should be valued and respected. They should be taught in schools as part of Global Citizenship and raise awareness on that not all children are as lucky as others, and that each individual child have many rights and they are aware of what they are. They must be aware that they have the right to get involved and that their voices are important. They should be heard whenever a decision are made which will affect them. Every child is important and they each possess a voice that should be heard (Children’s Rights Wales, 2016).

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