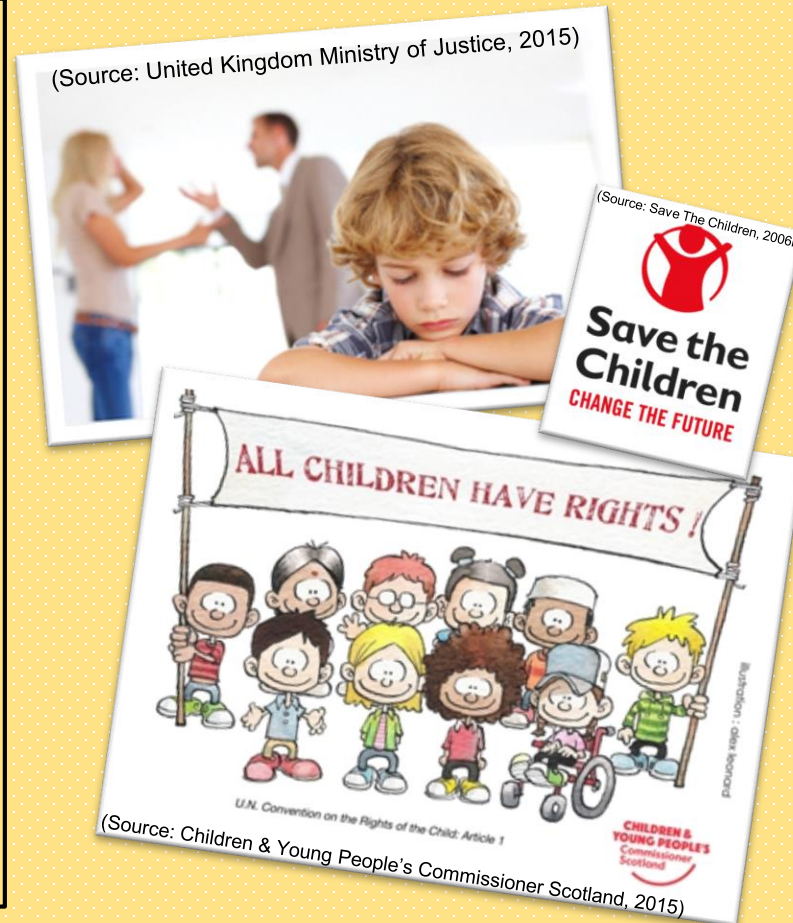


The importance of practitioners respecting the rights of a child with a disability

Understanding children's rights – The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([UNCRC](#)) is an international agreement detailing children's rights. It is a list of 54 rights that all children and young people under the age of 18 have (Welsh Government, 2019). Wales, in 2011, became the first United Kingdom (UK) country to make the [UNCRC](#) part of its domestic law (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2019b). Unicef (2010) state that, regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion, language and abilities, every child has these rights.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is responsible for ensuring children's rights under the [UNCRC](#) are being respected (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014) and is comprised of 18 independent children's rights experts (Child Rights Connect, 2019). The School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work at Queen's University Belfast (2016) suggest that the [UNCRC](#) aims to uphold 3 core principles: **dignity, equality and respect**.

The Voice of the Child – this is a term that is used to describe how we engage with children and young people (Birmingham Children's Trust, 2018); it is to listen to them and take into consideration their thoughts, feelings and opinions. This is covered by Article 12 of the [UNCRC](#), which states every child and young person has the right to express their feelings and wishes in matters that affect them and that these feelings must be taken seriously (Unicef, 2019). Bath and North East Somerset Council (2015) suggest that plans involving children are more successful when children are listened to and that when the voice of the child is not respected, children can feel less safe and that their general wellbeing is poorer. Tools can be utilised by practitioners to help children have a voice such as the *At School I Feel* by Derby City Council (2018); this enables the child to give their view on support they may need, have the opportunity to express their thoughts on their education and to have their say on actions for change.



Save The Children – a non-profit charity which exists to ensure children's safety, health education. The organisation was founded by Eglantyne Jebb and Dorothy Buxton, who campaigned, after the first World War, to help save children from malnutrition and illnesses (Save The Children, 2006a). The work of Save The Children paved the way for the [UNCRC](#) and how we know it today.

Children's rights in Wales – children's rights are law in Wales under the *Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011*. Wales was the first UK country to introduce a Children's Commissioner, whose responsibility it is to promote the well-being of children as well as raising awareness of children's rights (Welsh Government, 2019). Under the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2019a) children will learn about their rights and their mental health whilst in school, including those who are home-schooled. The Welsh Government took the 54 [UNCRC](#) articles and condensed them into 7 core aims. These aims ensure children and young people develop a "flying start," have access to comprehensive education, enjoy the best possible physical health, have access to play, are treated with respect, have a safe home and are not disadvantaged by child poverty (Play Wales, 2009).

Article 2

This article of the [UNCRC](#) details non-discrimination. This right entitles children and young people to be covered by the entire convention regardless of ethnicity, religion, ability or background (Unicef, 2019).

This Article serves to provide additional protection to children who are already covered by Article 14 of the *Human Rights Act 1998*. This article states that the freedoms and rights outlined in the *Human Rights Act 1998* shall be enjoyed regardless of sex, race, language, religion or political affiliation.



Article 23

Children with disabilities have the right to live a full, dignified and (where possible) independent life (Unicef, 2019).

It is imperative that practitioners, especially in early years settings, respect this right as these children can be more vulnerable and may require additional help with having their voice heard.

Per the Foundation Phase Framework, settings should endeavour to work alongside specialist learning services to ensure accessible learning experiences (Welsh Government, 2015).

This Article of the [UNCRC](#) provides additional protection to children who are also protected under the *Equality Act 2010*, a legal framework to protect the rights and aid in the advancement in equality of opportunity for all.



Four Articles from the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

Article 28

Every child has the right to an education, including free primary education and differing secondary education options (Unicef, 2019).

This Article is of paramount importance to practitioners working in a school setting as it is the foundation of rights-respecting schools (Unicef, 2017). Education endeavours to promote ideals such as democracy, tolerance, peace and economic growth. Children are provided with additional protection with regards to their education under the *Human Rights Act 1998* which states that no person shall be denied the right to an education.



Article 31

Every child has the right to engage in play and cultural & artistic activities (Unicef, 2019).

A Play Policy was drafted by the Welsh Government in 2002 detailing the impact on governments' decisions on children's opportunities to play (Play Wales, 2012). In this policy, the Welsh Government committed to ensuring all children are able to access rich and stimulating play experiences but with safeguards against unnecessary and inappropriate risk.

Play is vital to children as it has been observed to help develop their physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills (Play Scotland, 2013).

Respecting children's right to play in early years settings will ensure this development is not impeded upon.

Furthermore, the *Communications Act 2003* supports a child's right to rich engagement as it details the requirement for public service television to produce and display high quality programmes for children and young people.

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