

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international agreement, made up of 54 articles stating the rights of a child and how governments and adults should work together in order to ensure all children have access to their rights. Regardless of race, religion, language or abilities every child has rights (UNICEF, 2019). In 2011 the UNCRC became part of the domestic law within in Wales (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2017).

The objective of this paper is to raise awareness and provide relevant information to professional practitioners regarding the rights of a child during a parental separation.

Article 3 – All adults involved with the child should always consider and act on the best interests of the child. (Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, 2019).

- School practitioners should work in partnership to ensure the needs of the individual child are met.
- Through daily observations practitioners are able to assess the individual needs of a child in order to put forward a plan on how best to support the child. By doing this practitioners must have a good level of communication and work together to address any concerns and to ensure the best outcomes for the child (Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation stage, 2017).
- All observations need to be dated, timed and clearly written with precise information and kept in a safe place following the confidentiality policy within the setting and ensuring that the General Data Protection Regulations Act 2018 are followed precisely. Following the GDPR regulations personal data must be handled lawfully and documented correctly in order to protect the rights of the child (TES, 2019).
- Information sharing is important for safeguarding and promoting children's well-being. Making the right decision about information sharing can open opportunities to practitioners on the correct action to take in order to keep children safe and promote their well-being (HM Government, 2018).
- Parent Partnership Services (2019) states how important it is for practitioners and parents to work together to create the best outcomes for the child and to do this effectively; trust, commitment and respect need to be attained. Johnston and Nahmad-Williams (2009) states that by parents and practitioners working together to achieve the same goals, it can have a positive impact on a child's development.
- Multi agencies are a collective range of outside expertise that come together to offer the right support and opportunities for children and their families. (Atkinson et al. 2002). Therefore practitioners, parents/carers and multi agencies should have effective communication and appropriate information sharing to promote and support the outcomes of children.
- Multi agencies regarding a parental separation could include Early Help, Families First, Educational Psychologists and Team Around the Family.
- The needs of the child should be considered at all times. Practitioners could provide an intervention based on the specific needs of the child to help them feel supported and safe. Children displaying emotional and social difficulties through dealing with a parental separation may benefit from the ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) programme. This programme is deigned to offer emotional support through an age appropriate approach. Interventions like ELSA can promote a children's social relationships and self-esteem; two of the five areas of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Cherry, 2019).
- Decisions made by any adult involved with the child must always consider what is best for the child; respecting their rights at all times.

Article 9 – Children have a right to be with their parents unless it is against the best interests of the child. (UNCRC)

- UNCRC (2010) states that during parental separation practitioners should maintain a professional relationship and be in direct contact with both parents except if this option is not of the best interests of the child. Early Years Careers (2019) notes that the school setting can decrease conflict between parents by communicating with both parents; for example, both parents should be given letters, forms and school reports that concern their child.
- Practitioners should try their best to promote healthy relationships and ensure contact between the child and their parents to promote the well-being of the child (Social Services and Well-being Wales Act 2014).
- All adults involved with the child stay proactive when observing the child's well-being. Looking out for triggers or any changes to behaviours. By doing this, practitioners can plan a more appropriate curriculum to adapt to the child's needs. This way there is a higher chance of the child receiving the support they need and succeeding. This can be done with effective planning and good communication with both parents (GreatSchools, 2019).
- Both parents should receive the same level of support from the school setting; for example, signposting outside agencies to both parents can promote equality and provide opportunities for both parents to seek the right support during a difficult time. This will not only benefit the parents but will also have a positive impact on the child.
- All adults involved with the child should make sure the voice of the child is paramount at all times. Children should be listened to and respected.
- When working with children and their families the aims should be child centered and a continued process to achieve the best possible outcomes for the child (Every Child Matters, 2003).

Article 12 – children have a right express their views and adults involved with the child should assure their voice is heard when adults are making decisions that could affect them. Uncrc

- Bath and North East Somerset Council (2006) suggests that feeding back to the child about their thoughts and feelings can show the child that their views are being taken into consideration. This can make them feel valued and give them confidence to share their thoughts and feelings more often.
- Every Child Matters (2003) highlight that the child's voice and best interests should be at the centre of every decision made that could affect them (welsh government, 2016). Practitioners should consider the views of the child when planning and learn from the child on how to provide the right support to meet their needs.
- The Reggio Emilia Approach highlights that a child centred approach can promote the child's respect, responsibility, and sense of community. With children being a part of planning and decision making; it can strengthen their communication skills allowing to express their thoughts freely and make them feel involved (Meadow Lane Children's Day Nursery, 2019).
- Keeping Learners Safe (2002) suggest that adults should stay focused on the needs of the child by not concentrating on the relationship with the other adults involved; including colleagues. The focus should remain on the voice of the child and what is best for them.
- UNICEF (2010) highlights the importance of children's participation whether it is at home or at school. Practitioners should take measures to involve parents with the developments of their child and how to exercise their rights.
- Knowles (2009) notes that by giving children a voice; children feel empowered, encouraging them to grow into, independent and resilient adults.

Article 28 – Children have the right to an education. UNCRC

- All children have the right to an education. Practitioners should take appropriate measures to promote good attendance (UNCRC, 2010).
- Wheeler, H and Connor, J (2009) suggests that when practitioners build respectful and trusting relationships with parents, it makes them feel more involved resulting in successful outcomes when it comes to parental engagement. Along with good communication this could potentially benefit the level of the child's attendance.
- Furthermore, with good parent-school partnerships and when practitioners learn to understand the families background; practitioners can support and offer outside support to overcome any obstacles the family may be experiencing when it comes to their child attending school.
- Herne Hill School (2016) states that the level of stimulation and education a child receives between the ages of birth to 6 is critical to the stages of important development that will affect their future learning.
- Practitioners should always follow up any absences to safeguard the child and find out the reason for the absence. By keeping track of patterns that might occur with regular lateness or absences the school must take necessary action following their safeguarding policy to ensure the child is safe. BEN WHITNEY, 2015
- When there are concerns with poor attendance within a school setting will make a referral the Educational Welfare Service for outside support. An Educational Welfare Officer will then contact the child's parents to support them with raising the standard of the child's attendance rates. Good attendance allows children to reach their full potential and enjoy the rich opportunities that an education in school has to offer (Education Authority, 2019).

To conclude, respecting the rights of a child; the voice and best interests of the child must be paramount at all times. The evidence within this briefing paper outlines the importance of effective partnership working in order to safeguard children and promote their well-being. Along with the UNCRC articles and national guidelines and legislations adults are provided with sound advice on how we should base children at the centre of every decision made and consider their welfare to always be the main focus on how to support them to the highest standard.

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