

Marking 30 years of children's rights

This November marks the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The UNCRC was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and signed by the UK in 1990. To this day it still protects and celebrates the rights of children in your care.

The UNCRC states that all children have the right to grow up in an environment that meets their basic needs and allows them choices and decisions of their own.

The importance of the UNCRC

Early childhood consultant Sue Asquith talked to Nursery News about the importance of the UNCRC: "Life is full of hustle and bustle for children and pressures 'to do well'. There are also sharp rises in the numbers of children with poor mental health. Article 31 gives children the right to have some free time, play and rest, times where there are no pressures or set outcomes. During their play, children actively learn and explore the world around them and problem solve, helping to build resilience and self-regulation skills.

"While facilitating children's play, adults can also help children with their right to have a voice and have their views heard. This may be straight forward for the pre-school aged children, but how are you recognising and acting upon the 'voice' of babies and young children? What about the toddler in a tantrum or meltdown? Their behaviour is communicating something to you! What strategies do you have to find out what it is?"

Embedding in your practice

The UNCRC should be embedded into your practice, policies and procedures.

Read through the UNCRC articles and see where they best fit within your own policies and ethos. Some will be clear, for example, the articles relating to child protection clearly fit into your safeguarding policy, and you could even reference the article number in your policy.

Then check through your policies and procedures and highlight where they support the rights of the child.

You can download the latest NDNA Policies and Procedures templates from our website at www.ndna.org.uk/memberhub

Tips to celebrate

20 November is now celebrated as World Children's Day, and this year a petition will be handed over to world leaders on this date, calling on them to commit to fulfilling the rights of every child now and for future generations.

You can find out more and sign the petition at www.unicef.org/world-childrens-day. You can also get involved by "going blue" (UNICEF's logo colour). Why not dress in blue or incorporate blue into your messy play, and share with #GoBlue on social media to show your support!

More activities include considering opportunities for every child to give their views at your setting. Try changing the theme of your home corner or role play area, discussing options with the children and allowing a vote. You could even hold a children's council!

What is the UNCRC?

The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, or the UNCRC, is a list of 54 articles that list what the rights of every child should be, regardless of where they are born or grow up.

It underpins all statutory frameworks in early years, regardless of the nation.

Numbers 1 to 42 are the main articles affecting the children in your care directly. They include:

- Non-discrimination
- Respect for the views of the child
- Freedom of expression
- Right to privacy
- Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
- Adequate standard of living
- Leisure, play and culture
- Knowledge of rights.

Articles 43 to 54 are about how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

You can view all the articles in full at www.unicef.org.uk/un-convention-child-rights

MEMBERS RESOURCES

Find further support at www.ndna.org.uk/uncrc - including:

- A link to articles on the UNCRC
- Our UNCRC factsheet which is free for members
- Our online training course on the UNCRC, just £5 or include it in our short course training bundle (www.ndna.org.uk/bundles)
- Tips and activities to support the UNCRC.

