



National Day Nurseries Association

★Brighter thinking  
for early years

# Factsheet

A photograph of three young children in a classroom setting. They are sitting on the floor, looking towards the camera with their hands raised. The child on the left is a young girl with dark hair, wearing a purple cardigan over a blue top. The child in the middle is a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a colorful striped sweater. The child on the right is a young boy with dark hair, wearing a teal polo shirt. The background shows a classroom with a whiteboard and colorful posters.

## The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

England

# The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

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 UNCRC is a list of 54 articles that list what the rights of each and every child should be, regardless of where they are born or grow up.

Almost every country in the world has signed up to the UNCRC which means that almost all children in the world should have the same rights in their childhood.

The UK signed the UNCRC in 1990 and this came into effect in the UK in January 1992. All statutory frameworks in early years (regardless of the nation) are underpinned by these articles. These can be found at <https://bit.ly/3z4HN96>

## About the articles

There are 54 articles within the UNCRC, articles 43 to 54 explain how governments and international organisations will work to ensure children are protected with their rights, so it is mainly articles 1 to 42 that will inform your practice. We will look at some of the articles in detail in this factsheet and how you should be embedding these into your practice, policies and procedures within your early years setting.

Articles taken from the UNICEF Child Friendly Language poster found <https://bit.ly/3FpDwjN> will help you to see what, as a nation, England have signed up to in order to ensure all children in our care have their basic rights met.

There are four articles which are known as general principles:

- Article 2: Non-discrimination whatever their ethnicity, language, sex, religion or abilities
- Article 3: The best interests of the child should be at the centre of any decisions or actions affecting the child
- Article 6: Every child has to right to survival, life and development of their full potential
- Article 12: The child's right to be heard.

## Where do these fit into our practice?

### Everyday practice

Articles 1, 2, 12, 13, 16, 19, 27, 31 and 42 all relate to your daily practice with the children, e.g. rights to make their own decisions.

This could be as simple as:

- Free flow play
- Child initiated play opportunities
- Child height storage to allow them to choose what they want to play with
- Choosing who they want to play with and when
- Self-serve at meals to allow them to make their own healthy choices about the food they choose and eat
- Use a responsive approach to planning
- In terms of babies - interpreting their cries, meeting their needs, ensuring they are heard and are being supported to reach their full potential.

The right to play and rest should be embedded in your ethos.

This section includes the children's right to know their own rights and how you as adults support them to understand this.

There are some rights that children need to know about, others that may not concern them, but they should still be discussed so your children understand why they are in place and are able to discuss the children that these may apply to.

Think about how you could relay the rights in a child friendly way and then provide tools to remind children, e.g. posters, displays, books.

How could you support the children to incorporate their rights into the rules or behaviours that all the children follow in the setting? E.g. not offending others by their comments or opinions?

## Safeguarding

Articles 12, 16, 19, 27, and 33-39 all relate to safeguarding children. Some also relate to the Prevent Duty, which protects children from radicalisation. Many of the articles under this section relate to your usual safeguarding practice, e.g. neglect, sexual abuse and physical abuse and include the right of the child's voice to be heard. These should be embedded into your policies and procedures and throughout your practice, training and day to day practice.

- When you attend safeguarding training, think about the rights of the child and how this relates to your role in keeping them safe from harm
- During supervisions consider what you do each day to protect children's rights whilst safeguarding them from harm
- Consider how you teach children to keep themselves safe from harm, how they understand about their own privacy and what this means, and what to do if an adult made them feel

uncomfortable, unsafe or worried at any time. Discuss who they can talk to and their rights to be heard and listened to. This will all create a stronger safeguarding environment for the children you care for, allow them to exercise their own rights and learn about how to keep themselves safe from harm.

## Policies and procedures

There are specific articles that should be embedded in your nursery's ethos, policies and procedures to ensure that they are at the heart of all you do. Read through the articles and see where they fit best within your own policies.

As a manager some will be clear, for example, the articles relating to child protection clearly fit in your safeguarding policy and you may even consider referencing the number to show how seriously you take the rights of the child.

As a practitioner it is important to understand all your policies and procedures and how they support the rights of the child whilst adhering to your statutory frameworks and laws relative to your country.

## Personal, social and emotional development (PSED)

Supporting children's PSED is a key element of your practice as this is how you:

- Build self esteem
- Give a sense of belonging
- Support them to be kind
- Support them to be respectful of others and themselves
- Learn about tolerance and respect
- Develop their emotional well-being, ensuring they rest and relax as well as play and learn
- Learn about other's similarities and differences and celebrate these.

The UNCRC support all the elements of PSED by ensuring children learn about other children, families and communities and respect their own and other's beliefs.

Very young children will play together regardless of ethnicity, sex, religion or language. As their relationships become more complex, they look to adults for guidance. If practitioners model the guiding principles of the convention and talk about what they are doing, then children will develop a natural respect for each other's rights.

## Further reading

- UNCRC child friendly material can be found at <https://bit.ly/2pY2yWn>
- For a poster for the children to see and use try <https://uni.cf/2rDWZNd>

- Think about tailoring the NSPCC Underwear Rules Campaign to be more age appropriate for the older children in your setting, with the prior discussion with the parents of course <https://bit.ly/35A7P5M>

## Further training

NDNA have created an online course 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).'

This online course will support all practitioners working with children to understand the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

You will gain knowledge and practical ideas about examining particular UNCRC articles relevant to the early years community, how the UNCRC links with current early years legislation, discovering the difference between wants and needs and finally learn how to embed children's rights into everyday practice.

Further information can be found at <https://ndna.org.uk/uncrc>

**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child V0.3 – 14 December 2023**



National Day Nurseries Association

★Brighter thinking  
for early years

# Factsheet

Our factsheets are written by early years experts for the early years workforce. Most NDNA factsheets are free to our members.

NDNA is the national charity and membership association representing children's nurseries across the UK. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability, so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours.

We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at [www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets](http://www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets)

*The information provided in this factsheet is for use by early years practitioners only. It has been written by early years experts but is not intended to be, and should not be relied upon, as a substitute for professional advice. NDNA has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information presented in this factsheet. NDNA assumes no legal liability or responsibility for your interpretation or use of the information contained within it.*

## National Day Nurseries Association

National Early Years Enterprise Centre, Longbow Close, Huddersfield HD2 1GQ  
tel: 01484 407070 fax: 01484 407060 [info@ndna.org.uk](mailto:info@ndna.org.uk) [www.ndna.org.uk](http://www.ndna.org.uk)