



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# UNCRC

An introduction to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

We want a Wales where children's rights are a reality for each and every child.



# Rights

## All rights, all children and young people, all of the time

Rights are something everyone has as a result of being born. No one has power to give them to you or take them away from you. There are no conditions attached to them.

Children and young people have rights under the Human Rights Act 1998. They also have rights under the UNCRC, which is an international human rights convention which the UK Government agreed to in 1991.

The UNCRC is an international agreement which protects the human rights of children up to the age of 18. It recognises not only their basic human rights but gives them additional rights to protect them from harm as one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

It covers everything from having a name and nationality to clean drinking water. Simply, these are things children and young people need to be happy, healthy and safe.

**UNCRC stands for** United Nations  
Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UNCRC is a list of rights that all children and young people, everywhere in the world have, no matter who they are, where they live or what they believe in.

All Governments who have signed up to the UNCRC, including the Welsh Government, have to make sure that children, young people and adults know about and understand the UNCRC.

As well as talking about children and young people's rights, the UNCRC sets out quite a lot of things that Governments across the world need to do to support children and young people to enjoy their rights. These include making sure that as many people as possible know and understand about rights and support children and young people to participate and have their voices heard when decisions are being made that affect them.

Rights are what children and young people are entitled to, needs are what you require. Governments should respect children and young people's rights and help them to know about and claim them.

**Rights** are associated with **being**, whereas **needs** are associated with **having**.



When we learn about rights we learn that not only do we have them ourselves but everyone else has them too. Therefore, when we are enjoying our own rights, we have a duty to make sure that we do so in a way that doesn't deny other people theirs.

So for example, if you are enjoying your right to participate in decision-making on issues that affect you (Article 12) by getting involved in a discussion with 6 other people, all 7 have the right to have their voices heard, even if their views are fundamentally different to yours.

## The UNCRC has 54 articles:

It protects the rights of children and young people up to 18 years of age across the world.

**Articles 1-41** set out rights about how children and young people should be treated so they are safe, healthy and happy.

The other 13 articles are all about how Governments and adults should work together to make sure children and young people can access and enjoy these rights (1-41).

These rights are the things that are important to make sure children and young people:

- are safe
- are not discriminated against
- have their best interests protected
- have the things they need to survive and develop
- and have a say in decisions that affect their lives.

In 2011 the Welsh Government decided to take an extra step and make the UNCRC law in Wales. This law is called the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011. The Measure has changed the way the Welsh Government works. It means the Welsh Ministers have to consider children's rights in everything they do.



## There are **4** main principles of the UNCRC:

Special emphasis is given to four articles, known as '**general principles**', because they are basic to applying all of the other rights.

### **Non-discrimination** (Article 2)

All the rights guaranteed by the UNCRC must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind.

## 2

### **Best Interests of the Child** (Article 3)

The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

## 3

### **The Right to Life, Survival and Development** (Article 6)

Every child has the right to life, survival and development.

## 4

### **The Views of the Child** (Article 12)

Every child has the right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect them.

All of the articles cover **3** main themes.

Sometimes they're called the **3 P's**.



### **Participation**

These articles are based on the idea of the child or young person as someone who actively contributes to society as a citizen in the here and now – not just someone on the receiving end of good or bad treatment from others.

### **Provision**

These articles cover the basic rights of children and young people to survive and develop. These range from health care, food and clean water to education and an environment which allows children to develop. The UNCRC is clear that the best place for a child is normally with their family, and that the Government has a duty to support and assist parents.

### **Protection**

These articles deal with exploitation of children and young people at work; physical, sexual and psychological abuse; discrimination and other mistreatment which many still suffer, including in the UK. The UNCRC asks Governments to protect children and young people and, where necessary, to provide rehabilitation for them.

## Frequently Asked questions

### Why do we need the UNCRRC?

- Children and young people have the same human rights as everyone else. However because of their youth and vulnerability the Convention provides them with additional rights to protect them and ensure they are not discriminated against.
- Children and young people are especially susceptible to the environment and prevailing conditions in which they live and are more vulnerable than other groups in society.
- They can be 'invisible' if adults do not provide the pathways through which they can be heard.
- Children and young people have not always been accepted as the holders of rights – they and their rights are often seen as the 'possessions' of their parents.

### Why is the UNCRRC so important?

- It gives children and young people additional human rights. These rights should be at the heart of governance.
- It applies to everyone. All of the rights are considered to be equally important and cannot be taken away.
- It emphasises that children and young people require protection and should also be empowered as citizens now.
- It is applicable all of the time for all children and young people in all situations.

### What are Human Rights?

Human Rights are universal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actions (violations) and omissions (failures) that affect their freedom and human dignity.

### What is a right?

A right is something that children and young people are entitled to, they do not have to be earned, and they belong to all children and young people from the time they are born.

### What does this mean for children and young people in Wales?

- There is a law which says all Welsh Ministers must think about children's rights.
- The Welsh Government must try to make everyone in Wales aware of the UNCRRC.
- The Welsh Government has a Children's Rights Scheme which explains how they are thinking about children's rights.

To find out more read our [Children's Rights in Wales](#) leaflet.





**Go on!**


**Explore children's rights!**

To find out about your rights visit:  
[childrensrights.wales](http://childrensrights.wales)



**To contact us:**

email: [childrensrights@gov.wales](mailto:childrensrights@gov.wales)

 @uncrc\_wales



**Children's Rights Wales**

This website is all about the UNCRC. It brings together different opportunities to get involved. It also has information, training, resources and contacts to help children, young people and organisations across Wales.

[Click here](#)



**In your local area**

Local Authorities must, under law, give opportunities for children and young people to participate and have a voice. They must also let them know where and how to get involved. You can contact your Local Council and ask them how you can get involved.



**National Assembly for Wales**

The Assembly is made up of Assembly Members who are voted in from all over Wales from different political parties. They check and question the Welsh Government on how we are thinking about rights and looking after all children and young people.



**Young Wales**

**Young Wales** makes sure there are different ways for children and young people to have their say on issues that are important to them, and be heard by the government and others.

[Click here](#)



**Meic**

Meic is an advocacy and information service for children and young people up to age 25. The service is free, confidential and can be contacted 24/7 by telephone, instant message or text. Meic is there to listen, provide information and support.

[Click here](#)



**Children's Commissioner for Wales**

Sally Holland works for every child and young person in Wales. She and her team support them to find out about children's rights, listen to find out what's important to them, provide advice and support if they think they've been treated unfairly, and speak up for them on important issues.

[Click here](#)