

## Podcast 2 - **A Closer Look at Articles Included in the UNCRC**

[Young Person 2 - Shayne]

Hi there, and welcome to the second of three podcasts all about children's rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I am Shayne and I'm here to help you take a closer look at United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and what you can do if your rights aren't being upheld. We'll also be hearing from some guests along the way, and there will be some discussion questions at the end which you can talk about with your group or class.

This podcast series is part of the Activate Your Rights project, a project run by Young Scot and Children in Scotland and funded by Scottish Government. The idea for this podcast came from children and young people themselves who worked with Young Scot and Children in Scotland to create resources and activities to promote the awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and children's rights to people in Scotland.

We know that everyone under 18 has rights, which are written down in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or UNCRC for short, but to help make sense of them, we're going to take a closer look at some of these rights.

Let's start with Article 12. Article 12 says that children and young people have the right to have their opinions heard when decisions are made that affect them. Let's look at some of these examples of this in Scotland. You might have heard of Scottish Youth Parliament and the Children's Parliament. These organisations are ways for children and young people to have their say about what's important to them, about matters such as education, safety, and health.

While the Children's Parliament works with different groups on specific projects, the Scottish Youth Parliament, or SYP for short, has 166 elected young people from all over Scotland that are responsible for representing your views to those who make decisions. Each area in Scotland has a Member of the Scottish Parliament, i.e., MSYP. and anyone age 14 to 25 can stand for election to Scottish Youth Parliament, and 14- to 25-year-olds can vote for who they want to represent them in their area in the SYP elections every two years.

Lots of local areas also have groups called Youth Council or Youth Forum. These are made up of young people who live locally and want to have a say about things that are going on in their community. Have a search online to see how you could get involved in one where you live.

There are loads of organisations in Scotland who support young people to have their voices heard too – Children in Scotland, Young Scot, Girl Guides and Scouts, or the Boys and Girls Brigades are good places to start looking.

Even if that doesn't appeal, there are other ways to get your voice heard nowadays. Children and young people all over the world are leading campaigns and social movements to change the way things are. If you are passionate about an issue in society, whether it's climate change, equality, homelessness, mental health... or whatever it may be, it might be a time to look online to see how you can get involved. Young people's voices are essential to the building Scotland and of Scotland that we can be proud of.

This is Maree Todd, the Minister for Children and Young People, talking about why it's important to have young people's voices heard in Scotland.

What role do children and young people play in making Scotland the vibrant, inclusive, forward thinking country it is?

[Maree Todd]

Well, do you know, one of the first things I did as minister, year of young people in 2018 was one of the first ministerial things I was involved in and actually it was an absolute pleasure, it's the first time we've had a whole year dedicated to celebrating people, and time and time again during that year I said children are the now as well as the future. That it is really exciting because children genuinely are the future, you know and I'm certainly feeling my age as this pandemic follows its course so, you know, it is inherently

exciting to be involved realising children's rights and their potential. Article 12 of UNCRC is about the right for children and young people to have their voices listened to when people make decisions which affect them and the Scottish governments totally committed to ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of these decisions and we've made real progress in the last few years to ensure that their voices are listened to and that their views are taken into account. We work with youth information and citizenship organisations like Young Scot, the Scottish parliament, Scottish youth parliament, the children's parliament to help children and young people so that they are given the opportunity to participate in and influence local and national activities and decisions, and by supporting children and young people to have their voices heard and acted on they are able to make Scotland a better place to grow up. So, I've seen loads of examples where children and young people have been instrumental in making really significant changes in government policies.

[Young Person 2 - Shayne]

So, that was Article 12. We're going to look at Articles 13 and 15 together now, as they complement each other. Article 13 says that you have the right to your own beliefs and to express yourself however you want, and Article 15 says that you have the right to join groups and clubs and see your friends. There's a really important limit to these rights though, which is that these things you say and the groups that you are a member of should not harm any other people.

Everyone has a responsibility to respect each other's rights, but unfortunately sometimes people can start to believe that certain groups of people are not equal to them. This can have really serious effects on people, like being bullied, called names, excluded, or even hurt.

You might be able to think of some examples of groups not respecting other people. It might be because of their race, religion, disability, gender or sexuality. If you treat someone differently because of who they are, this is called discrimination.

In the UK, we are protected from discrimination by the law, and if you say nasty things about someone because of who they are, this is called hate speech, and is against the law. If someone commits a crime against you because of who you are, this is called a hate crime.

This might be a good time to mention Article 30. This Article guarantees that people who are part of a minority culture in their country, are still able to practice that culture and speak their own language. This right is quite relevant in Scotland, as in the past people who spoke the Scots language and Scottish Gaelic were often made to speak English to get ahead at school or in other walks of life, and many people felt like they shouldn't speak Gaelic or Scots anymore.

While this is no longer the case, and Scots and Gaelic are making a decent comeback, you might be able to think of people you know who speak a different language or are from another culture. Maybe you could think of some ways that cultures and languages can stay vibrant even when they are in the minority?

Finally, I'm just going to mention Article 29. This Article is about education. It says that education should help you to develop your skills and personality, should prepare you for life in a free and equal society, should promote rights and respect from all natural environments. I wonder if you can think of examples of how your education does all of this.

To find out more about the UNCRC and your rights visit the Activate Your Rights page at [young.scot](http://young.scot). If you've got any questions about how your rights are represented, you can contact the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland, you can find the contact details at [cypcs.org.uk](http://cypcs.org.uk).

Let's hear from Maree Todd, the Minister for Children and Young People for a moment, to remind us of why it's so important to respect children's rights.

[Maree Todd]

We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow up. We have a vision of a Scotland where all children and young people, and all families, because children live in

families, are treated with dignity and with respect wherever they are and whatever their background is. And absolutely fundamental to that is the need for duty bearers, government, public services, parents, carers to be aware of children's rights. It is vitally important. Children and young people themselves also need to be aware of their rights and how to act on them. You know as I said earlier if you don't know your rights it's impossible to defend them isn't it.

[Young Person 2 –Shayne]

And we spoke to some young people about why they think it's important.

[Young Person 3]

I think it's important for children to know about their rights because it gives them a sense of empowerment and value. They don't just want an identity; they should have an identity. They should have everything from a shelter to their own opinion and everything in between. Knowing their rights will make them feel more confident to ask for their rights if they are not being met.

[Young Person 2 –Shayne]

Now that you know a bit more about your rights, I feel it's time to ask an important question. What do you do if your rights aren't being respected?

We asked the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland, Bruce Adamson, to tackle this one:

[Bruce Adamson]

So, for a child or young person who feels that their rights aren't being respected, it's really important that they talk to people around them. And so, people like parents and families, also others like community workers and people around you, they can all help. And my office can help as well. So, the children and young people's commissioners Scotland, we want to hear about that. And so, if your rights aren't being respected then it's really important that you're able to tell us but be also able to work with others around you, because it's not your job to fix those problems.

[Young Person 2 –Shayne]

The truth is, there are lots of different answers to that question depending on the right that is not being respected. If your right to safety and protection from harm is not being respected, then you should tell a trusted adult or call the police in an emergency. Just like the police are there to help keep you safe, there are other people and organisations in Scotland to help make sure your other rights are being respected. Your teacher or headteacher is the person to speak to if you feel like your rights aren't being respected at school, and you might want to have a conversation with your parents or guardians if you feel like your right to privacy or to choose your own religion aren't being upheld.

If your rights haven't been respected by an organisation, like a company or public service, then there will usually be a way to get in touch with them and to talk about this. Speak to an adult if you need some help with this or look online for the complaints section of an organisation's website.

Sometimes, it can be hard to feel like you're having to stand up for your rights by yourself, but you don't have to do it alone. In fact, there are loads of organisations and adults around to help you! So many that I can't list them all here, but if you have any questions or need some help visit the Activate Your Rights page at [young.scot](http://young.scot).

If you want to discuss children's rights in a group, think about the following questions:

- What are some issues that are important to you in society at the moment, and how could you make your opinion on this heard?
- What could be done within your school, group or community to make sure that everyone is able to express themselves freely without facing bullying or discrimination?

- Can you think of a time when one of your rights hasn't been respected? What would you have wanted to happen in that situation to make sure your rights were respected? Is there anything different you could have done? Take a look at all the articles of the UNCRC to remind yourself of your rights if you need to.