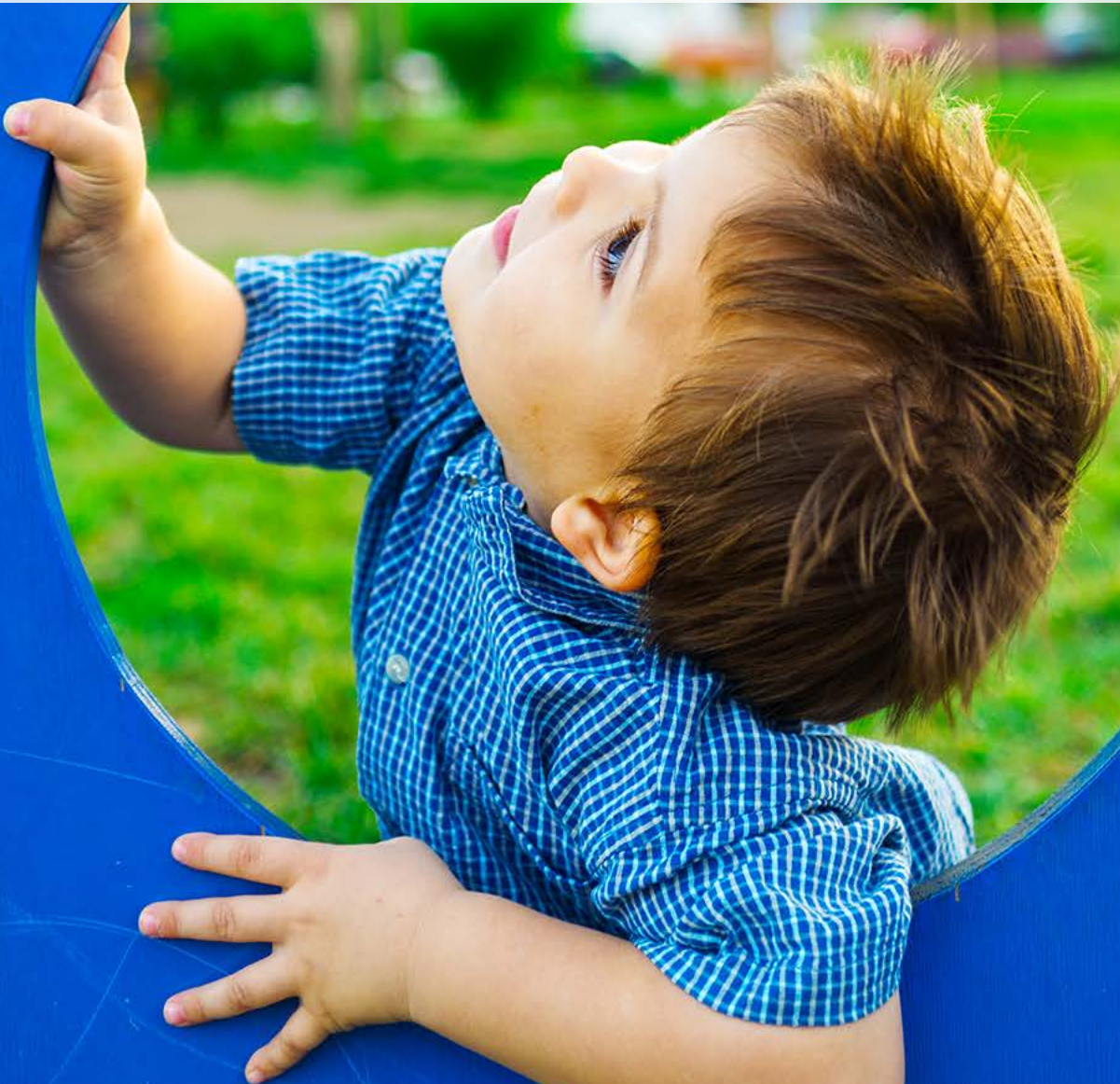


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# Understanding Child Poverty as a Children's Rights Issue

## Introductory Paper



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# Introduction

*'Child poverty is the single biggest breach of children's human rights in Scotland'*- this statement was made by Bruce Adamson, The Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland, in 2021 in the wake of the devastating economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> More recently the rapid rise in the cost of living has created another wave of crisis which is hitting families with children particularly hard. This paper examines child poverty in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([UNCRC](#)).

A wide range of rights is affected by child poverty including the rights to an adequate standard of living including food, clothing and housing, to education, to the highest attainable standard of health, to legal assistance, to play, to freedom of expression, to benefit from social security, to family life, to alternative care, to protection from all forms of physical or psychological abuse, and a wide range of rights of children with disabilities. In the most severe cases, child poverty can even threaten the child's right to survive and develop to their full potential. Living in poverty can affect every aspect of a child's life and it often serves to curtail their life chances in adulthood feeding the cycle of intergenerational poverty that undermines social cohesion.

Scotland has a clear focus on the reduction of child poverty, setting it as a 'national mission' to reduce the number of children growing up in poverty. The [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) sets clear national targets for the reduction of child poverty and the strategy of '[Best Start, Bright Futures 2022-2026](#)', provides the latest national action plan to address it. The UNCRC has also been incorporated into Scots law through the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) requiring public authorities to meet the basic needs of children and young people in Scotland.

Local government in Scotland, together with their partners, already undertake a volume of work to reduce child poverty locally.<sup>2</sup> This includes annual reporting on the actions they take and plan to take to reduce child poverty. The incorporation of the UNCRC brings additional duties on public authorities to act compatibly with the UNCRC and to report on children's rights every three years. This paper explores the relationship between these agendas, drawing out links and understanding across them.

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1 [Our Position on Child Poverty in Scotland](#), The Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, 2021.

2 [Local Child Poverty Action Reports](#), Improvement Service.

# 1. What are children's rights?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people a comprehensive set of rights. It covers civil and political rights as well as social, cultural and economic rights. The UNCRC seeks to protect children from harm, provide for their growth and development, and empower their participation in society. The UK signed the Convention on 19 April 1990, ratified it on 16 December 1991 and it came into force on 15 January 1992. The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history signalling the universal importance of children's rights. All countries that ratified the UNCRC are bound by international law to ensure it is implemented. This is monitored by the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#).

The UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to realise these rights. The UNCRC recognises children under the age of 18 as both active rights holders and vulnerable human beings in need of special protection. Under the terms of the Convention, governments are required to meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential. There are four articles which are known as the General Principles and these principles help to interpret other rights and are at the heart of a rights-based approach.

Children and young people:

- ▶ Should not be discriminated against (Article 2)
- ▶ Should have their best interests accounted for as a primary consideration (Article 3)
- ▶ Have the right to survive and develop (Article 6)
- ▶ Should have their views heard and taken seriously (Article 12)

Ratification of the Convention signals an international commitment to children's rights, however, it does not make it legally binding at the national level. Therefore, the legal incorporation of the Convention into domestic law is crucial in making countries accountable at the national level. The Scottish Government is committed to Scotland becoming the best place in the world to grow up by realising children's rights enshrined in the UNCRC. The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#) incorporates the UNCRC into Scots law within the powers of the Scottish Parliament. The Act places a duty on public authorities to comply with the rights and obligations of the UNCRC and to produce a report every three years detailing the steps they have taken and plan to take in the future to meet, or give further effect to meet, or give further effect to, the UNCRC requirements. The Act

grants the power to children, young people and their representatives to enforce children's rights in Scottish courts, and seek damages or compensation against a public authority where they have unlawfully breached a child's right under the UNCRC.



## 2. Understanding poverty

Poverty means more than just not having enough money to meet basic needs. In 1979, Peter Townsend presented a definition of poverty which brought a focus beyond the material understanding of a lack of money.<sup>3</sup>

*“Individuals and families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary in societies to which they belong.”*

Peter Townsend (1979)

For Townsend, poverty is less about a lack of income and more about the inability of people on low incomes to actively and meaningfully participate in society and the culture they live in. Poverty is seen as a deprivation of capabilities and this approach is closely linked to self-worth and the human rights concept of human dignity. This definition suggests that poverty can be best understood in relative terms as social exclusion due to a lack of resources. In Scotland, an individual is in relative poverty if they are living in a household with an income below 60% of the median household income in that year, after housing costs. This measure essentially looks at inequality between low- and middle-income households.<sup>4</sup>

Poverty can affect people in different stages of their lives. Experiencing poverty for any period has an impact on the outcomes and wellbeing of children and families. While there is no separate definition of ‘child poverty’, it is important to understand its implications. In her book, *Child Poverty: Aspiring to Survive*,<sup>5</sup> Morag Treanor argues that child poverty is distinct from adult poverty for a number of reasons:

- I. Living in poverty for a few years in childhood represents a significant portion of a child’s life. Poverty adversely impacts many aspects of a child’s development, resulting in children accumulating disadvantages throughout their childhoods. Poverty shapes growth and achievement, affecting pre-natal and peri-natal health and development, child health, wellbeing and family stress.
- II. It is important to remember that children control few of the financial levers which affect their family circumstances and rely on the adults around them for food, shelter, clothing, etc.

3 [Introduction: Concepts of Poverty and Deprivation](#). In *Poverty in the United Kingdom: A Survey of Household Resources and Standards of Living*, p. 31., Peter Townsend, 1979.

4 [Poverty in the UK: Statistics](#), Brigid Francis-Devine, House of Commons Library, September 2022.

5 [Child Poverty: Aspiring to Survive](#), p. 2-4., Morag Treanor, February 2020.

- III. Children also have little control over the distribution of resources within their families – how resources are shared within a family will have an impact on the prevalence of child poverty.
- IV. Finally, children are widely considered to be blameless (even where society has a negative view of their parents) as such they deserve care and protection from poverty.

Poverty affects children’s lives in many ways. In its report,<sup>6</sup> Public Health Scotland summarised the effects of poverty on children’s health and wellbeing:

- ▶ Children and families living in poverty suffer greater health and social inequalities than their better-off peers.
- ▶ The negative impacts of poverty on children start before birth and accumulate across the life course.
- ▶ Poverty has negative impacts on children’s health, social, emotional and cognitive development, behaviour and educational outcomes.
- ▶ Poverty puts an additional strain on families, which can lead to parental mental health and relationship problems, financial problems and substance misuse. This can have a negative impact on parenting behaviours, which in turn affects children’s outcomes.
- ▶ Children in the lowest income households are four times more likely to experience mental health problems, with consequences extending into adulthood.
- ▶ Disadvantaged adults may have an increased risk of their own children experiencing poverty.

*“There’s no compassion - just numbers. You just want people to be cared for, listened to and have the basics. It’s all about regulations and forms which adds to the stress.”*  
(Pupil, age 16)

## Poverty-related stigma

The latest inquiry into poverty-related stigma in Scotland finds that stigma remains extensive and deep-rooted in Scottish society.<sup>7</sup> The way society perceives and treats people experiencing poverty can be extremely degrading. This attitude towards poverty negatively impacts the mental health and self-esteem of people experiencing poverty by reinforcing feelings of shame and self-blame. The narrative that poverty is a result of individual choices rather than the structural failings of government policy can deepen experiences of

<sup>6</sup> [Child Poverty in Scotland: Health Impact and Health Inequalities](#), NHS Health Scotland, 2018

<sup>7</sup> [An inquiry into poverty-related stigma in Scotland](#), Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Poverty, February 2023.

poverty by creating barriers to people accessing the support they are entitled to including social security, free school meals, emergency welfare and debt advice. It can also serve as a justification for under-resourcing services designed to tackle poverty. This narrative is reinforced by the media that often depict people living in poverty as ‘scroungers’ and the frequent use of stereotypes normalises the negative attitude towards people experiencing poverty. As a result, people facing financial difficulties fear potential retribution for being honest about their money struggles which can cause delays in accessing help and thus worsens their financial situations.

*“I know a good few people who don’t actually get lunch because they feel like they’re using the money their parents could be using for something better [...] They feel responsible.”*  
(Pupil, age 15)

Young people are particularly sensitive to social media content that increasingly associates self-worth with material wealth. Poverty-related stigma significantly impacts young people’s self-esteem and mental health and has implications for educational attainment, often holding children back from fully participating in school academically, socially and in extracurriculars. This can have a profound impact on the child’s or young person’s future life chances.

A human rights-based approach to tackling poverty can help reduce stigma and encourage benefit uptake. Acknowledging the merits of a human rights-based approach, the [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#) explicitly states that social security is itself a human right and essential to the realisation of other human rights. Framing social security entitlements as a human right can change the narrative that people experiencing poverty do not deserve welfare support. In the long term, this can have a positive impact on the self-esteem and wider mental health of people who are in receipt of social security entitlements.

*“They talk behind your back [about what you wear] and stand staring at you.”*  
(Pupil, age 12)

## Child poverty in Scotland

Acknowledging the importance of tackling child poverty, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the Child Poverty Bill in 2017 and it entered into force later that year. The [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#) sets out statutory targets to reduce the number of children living in relative poverty by 2023/24, and then again by 2030/31. It requires Scottish Ministers to ensure less than 18%



of children are living in relative poverty by 2023/24 (interim target) and less than 10% of children are living in relative poverty by 2030 (final target). The latest official statistics available show that 26% of children (260,000) were living in relative poverty in Scotland in 2019/20, an increase from 23% (230,000) in 2018/19.<sup>8</sup> The Scottish Government reported that, on average, 25% of children in working households were living in poverty in the period 2017-20.<sup>9</sup> Due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is not enough reliable data on child poverty indicators for 2020/21, but expectations are that figures have risen. The Scottish Government is expected to publish new data on child poverty for the period 2021/22 this year.

The Poverty and Inequality Commission published its [scrutiny report](#) on the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Delivery Plan progress last year. The report finds that the action taken so far is very unlikely to be enough to meet the 2030 child poverty targets, but that the commitments made in the [2022-2026 Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#) should help the Scottish Government make progress.

*“In my friend group, I’d say about half of them can’t eat food when we go out, so you see people buying food for their friends. They come to lunch with me even though they’re not getting anything. We go to Greggs and, because I’ve got like £3 or £3.50 to spend, I’ll get two Yum Yums and a sausage roll and I’ll give them the Yum Yums, just because they don’t get any food anyway” (Pupil, age 15)*

<sup>8</sup> [Child Poverty Summary](#), Scottish Government, March 2022.

<sup>9</sup> [Children and priority groups in working households, and the share in relative poverty after housing](#), Scottish Government, May 2021.

### 3. Children’s rights and poverty

The relationship between children’s human rights and poverty has been long discussed in theory, however, there is a lack of understanding of what it means in practice. Poverty is not solely an economic issue, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses a lack of both income and the basic capabilities to live in dignity.

*‘Poverty is a human condition characterised by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.’*

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR)<sup>10</sup>

In this definition, poverty is framed as both a cause and a consequence of violations of human rights. It recognises that poverty threatens not only the enjoyment of social and economic rights, but it also infringes on certain civil, cultural and political rights. This definition helps us understand poverty as a breach of human rights. When poverty is defined not only as low income, but as a deprivation of capabilities – such as being adequately nourished, a lack of access to basic health services, social discrimination, political exclusion, etc. – then poverty is linked to the breaches of a whole range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

The right to live free from poverty is not set out in a single article within the UNCRC. Instead, we can draw from a range of rights which align with longer-term outcomes in tackling child poverty. One of these is Article 6 which states that beyond the inherent right to life, the state must ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child. Under Article 27, states are required to ensure the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Article 3 states that children’s best interests must be a primary consideration in all actions that affect them. This includes making decisions around welfare and support that significantly impact families.

*“I think it’s [free school meals] really good, because when I was a kid I didn’t have much to eat.” (Pupil, age 16)*

<sup>10</sup> [Substantive Issues Arising in the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), May 2001.

From this perspective, violations are caused not by poverty in itself, but by the failures of the government and other public bodies to prevent poverty or by the concrete actions taken that create or perpetuate poverty. As the Children and Young People’s Commissioner in Scotland argues, ‘poverty in Scotland is not inevitable; it is a political choice, a consequence of decisions made by the UK and Scottish Governments.’<sup>11</sup> This argument is well-illustrated in the case study below.

### Case study: The 2013 Benefit Cap<sup>12</sup>



The benefit cap, introduced in 2013, limits the benefits an out-of-work family can receive, including housing benefit and benefits for children, to £500 per week. It is applied regardless of family size or circumstances such as rental costs.

In 2015, the Supreme Court issued judgement on the case, *R (on the application of SG and others) v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions*, concerning an argument made on behalf of the two lone mothers that the benefit cap was discriminatory and unfair. In a sharply divided judgment, three of the five judges found that in introducing the cap, the UK Government failed to comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires the best interests of children to be paramount. They said that the cap deprived children of ‘the basic necessities of life’ and made them ‘suffer from a situation which is not of their making and which they themselves can do nothing about’.

Supreme Court judge Lord Carnwath recommended that the government review the policy. Deputy president of the court, Lady Hale, said that ‘claimants affected by the cap will, by definition, not receive the sums of money which the state deems necessary for them adequately to house, feed, clothe and warm themselves and their children.’

However, the final verdict was that the policy did not breach Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits discrimination. The European Convention is incorporated into UK law, while the UNCRC is not. As a result, the appeal was dismissed.

As the above case study shows, the incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law could have a significant impact on the outcome of court decisions. In particular, a legal recognition of children’s rights will mean that the government and other public authorities will be legally accountable for the policy choices, actions and omissions that create, perpetuate and exacerbate poverty.

<sup>11</sup> [Our Position on Child Poverty in Scotland](#), The Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> [Benefit Cap Breaches Children’s Rights, Supreme Court Says](#), Child Poverty Action Group, March 2015.



## Adequate Food

In September 2022, over 25% of UK households with children were experiencing food insecurity.



## Adequate Clothing

One in five single parents say they can no longer afford clothes.



## Adequate Housing

1.5 million people in Scotland are living in overcrowded, unsafe or unaffordable homes. 13,192 households are in temporary accommodation, including 7,510 children.

## Priority groups and the principle of non-discrimination

The Scottish Government's latest tackling child poverty delivery plan, [Best Start, Bright Futures](#), recognises that 'upholding rights is the foundation for improving wellbeing.' The delivery plan shows a clear commitment to 'embed a human rights approach to tackling child poverty through the development of a strategy to better mainstream equality and human rights through policy and delivery.' This is best demonstrated by the approach taken to priority groups – family types that are identified to be at a higher risk of child poverty. According to the [latest official figures](#), 24% of all children in Scotland are in relative poverty and almost 90% of all children in poverty in Scotland live within at least one of these six priority family types.

*“Well, I think if all of your friends or people you know go to the after school clubs, school trips, that kind of isolates you from them. You're singled out, you're not with them, just a spare person” (Pupil, age 15)*

<sup>13</sup> [Living without a lifeline – Single Parenting and the Cost of Living Crisis](#), One Parent Families Scotland, September 2022. [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), A Joint Civil Society report from: Human Rights Consortium Scotland, The Poverty Alliance, Who Cares? Scotland, Inclusion Scotland, Clan Childlaw, The ALLIANCE, Article 12, The Food Train, Close the Gap, Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD), Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland (ERCS), Community Policy Forum, Alcohol Focus Scotland, United Nations Association Scotland, and UN House Scotland, January 2023.

Family Type	% in relative poverty
Lone parent families	38%
Minority ethnic families	38%
Families with a person with disabilities	29%
Families with a younger mother (under the age of 25)	55%
Families with a child under the age of 1	34%
Larger families (3+ children)	32%

It is important to note that intersectionality within the priority groups is very common. 40% of children in lone parent families also have a person with disability at home; 54% of children in a family with a younger mother are also in a lone parent household; and 50% of children in a large family are also in a family in which someone has a disability.

[Article 2](#) of the UNCRC states that every child has rights ‘without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.’ In addition, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends the ‘collection of sufficient and reliable data on children, disaggregated to enable identification of discrimination and/or disparities in the realisation of rights.’<sup>14</sup> As discussed above, poverty is both a cause and consequence of rights violations and families in the priority groups are at higher risk of poverty which means that they are also at a higher risk of having their rights breached.

By recognising that certain families ought to be prioritised due to the specific barriers they face and the particular needs they have, the delivery plan fulfils and gives further effect to the UNCRC guiding principle of non-discrimination. In this context, non-discrimination is less about treating everyone the same way and more about understanding and meeting the particular needs of everyone to achieve fair outcomes. In order to effectively tackle child poverty, public authorities must gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics of the priority groups and the barriers they face, so responses to poverty can be tailored to their particular needs. Local authorities should align their equalities, child poverty and children’s rights work to draw from each area of work and have a better understanding of the diversity within their communities.

<sup>14</sup> [General comment No. 19 \(2016\) on public budgeting for the realization of children’s rights \(art. 4\)](#), para 48. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, July 2016.



## 4. The implications of the UNCRC Act at the local level

The UNCRC Act creates a new statutory duty making it unlawful for public authorities to act in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC. In addition to the compatibility duty, there is a provision of substantive and legal remedies when a violation occurs. These provisions apply to all functions of public authorities. In relation to local authorities, for instance, children's rights are not only relevant to education and children's services. All decisions made about and actions taken to deliver public services may impact the rights and wellbeing of children and young people, therefore, it is important that any organisation that carries out public functions considers children's rights in their work. It is vital that the UNCRC is considered explicitly and that actions are mainstreamed into the ways of working and thinking across all policy strands.

To ensure that public authorities respect, protect and fulfil children's rights, the UNCRC Act places a duty on public authorities to publish a report on the actions they have taken in the reporting period and actions they intend to take in the next reporting period to ensure compliance with the UNCRC requirements and give further effect of the rights of children. The UNCRC Act also requires the reports to be available in a version that children can understand - this is often referred to as a child-friendly or easy-read version.

### Children's rights-based approach to tackling poverty

A children's rights approach should be used by public authorities to inform their work towards achieving their targets under the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#). Children's rights are legal entitlements, which makes them both politically and legally powerful, and hold duty bearers accountable. While legal recognition of children's rights is important, cultural change is paramount to truly embed children's rights in everyday life in Scotland. A children's human rights-based approach to tackling poverty requires a shift in the way we think about poverty. In this vision, tackling poverty is not an act of charity, but an obligation and responsibility. Poverty should not be seen as an inevitable part of a society, but as an intolerable injustice and a failure of the government and public authorities to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

Taking a child rights-based approach to tackling child poverty involves some key elements such as ensuring that:

- ▶ children and young people have the opportunity to contribute their views and meaningfully participate in the development of approaches to tackle issues that affect them,
- ▶ children and young people are empowered to understand and advocate for their rights
- ▶ child poverty solutions uphold children’s rights,
- ▶ children can access information that is relevant to them in an easy-read format,
- ▶ priority groups are identified and their specific needs are met,
- ▶ sufficient, reliable and appropriately disaggregated data on children are available. This data must inform evidence-based policymaking in the context of child poverty.

There are a number of tools, guides and approaches available to support public authorities in their effort to embed human rights in their work. The below non-exhaustive list provides some useful examples

### Human rights-based approaches

- [Panel Principles](#), Scottish Human Rights Commission
- [FAIR Approach](#), Scottish Human Rights Commission

### Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

- [Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment Guidance](#), Scottish Government, November 2021.
- [Conducting Children’s Rights Impact Assessments: Learning in Action](#), Observatory of Children’s Human Rights Scotland, 2021.

[7 Golden Rules for Participation](#), Children’s and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland, September 2016.

### Child rights-based budgeting

- [General comment No. 19 \(2016\) on public budgeting for the realization of children’s rights \(art. 4\)](#), para 48. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, July 2016.
- [Human Rights Budget Work: What, Why, How?](#) Scottish Human Rights Commission, September 2019.

### Child-friendly/easy-read documents

- [Creating child-friendly versions of written documents: A guide](#), European Commission, September 2021.
- [How to Write a Child-Friendly Document](#), Save the Children, 2022.

[Guidance on taking a children's rights approach](#) is available on the Scottish Government's website.

A [Skills and Knowledge Framework](#) for UNCRC Implementation in Scotland is available with plenty of practical resources to help public authorities take a children's rights-based approach.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is also working on a new approach to handling complaints that involve children and young people. They are doing this by working with children and young people from a range of backgrounds, and from across Scotland, to co-design this new approach and ensure it is a system fit for purpose. Updates on this can be found on the Children's Human Rights in Scotland #UNCRC Group on the [Knowledge Hub](#).

## Mapping UNCRC Articles with drivers of poverty

The right to live free of poverty is not set out in a single article within the UNCRC. Instead, we can see that activity in each aspect of the core drivers of poverty can contribute to the fulfilment of children's human rights. Many local government services will directly support the fulfilment of rights, while others will indirectly support parents/carers or wider community work which supports the realisation of children's rights.

### Income from Employment

**Art 32** the right to be protected from economic exploitation and performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education or be harmful to the child's health.

**Art 18** States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

**Art 27** Right to a standard of living adequate for a child's physical, mental, moral and social development.

### Income from Benefits

**Art 26** Right to benefit from social security.

**Art 27** Right to a standard of living adequate for a child's physical, mental, moral and social development.

**Art 4** The state must do all it can, through passing legislation and creating administrative systems, to promote and protect children's rights. With regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources.

### Cost of Living

**Art 6** Right to life, survival and development.

**Art 31** Right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

**Art 24** Right to the highest attainable standard of health.

**Art 27** Right to a standard of living adequate for a child's physical, mental, moral and social development.

### Income from Employment

- Parental Employability Support
- Youth Work Programmes
- Flexible Childcare
- Living Wage Employers
- Family-friendly employers

### Income from Benefits

- Automation of Benefits
- School Clothing Grants
- Discretionary Housing Benefit
- Income Maximisation Services

### Cost of Living

- Support with Transport Costs
- Fuel Poverty Support
- Tackling Food Insecurity
- Free School Meals
- Support for those setting up home

# A practical example of linking local action to children's rights

## East Lothian Works

East Lothian Works is an employability service in East Lothian. Its overarching aim is 'inspiring and supporting individuals and businesses to thrive'. They offer services to young people (who are often still at school), to adults and support to businesses. They have a mentoring programme for young people in S2-S6 and pre-vocational programmes for secondary school students to help them develop social and practical skills and prepare them for life beyond school. The programmes are designed to help young people gain valuable life skills that will help towards employment or a place in college or university. Within their services they are directly allowing young people to access their rights and indirectly allowing children and young people to have their rights upheld. They undertook an exercise using the FAIR approach to help them assess their readiness for the UNCRC. They focused on identifying which of the UNCRC Articles were most relevant to their service. These include, for example:

- Article 28** Right to education
- Article 29** A child or young person's education should help their mind, body and talents be the best they can. It should also build their respect for other people and the world around them including the environment.
- Article 32** Children shouldn't work until they reach a particular age and should not be allowed to do dangerous work.
- Article 27** Right to an adequate standard of living
- National Living wage to tackle in-work poverty
  - Help with transport costs to access employment
  - Flexible childcare
  - Jobs access for those with low qualifications
  - Support for parents to return to work/ education
- Article 17** Right to information in a variety of ways
- Article 12** Views of the child  
e.g. Are the views of children and young people considered when deciding on the provision of particular support services.



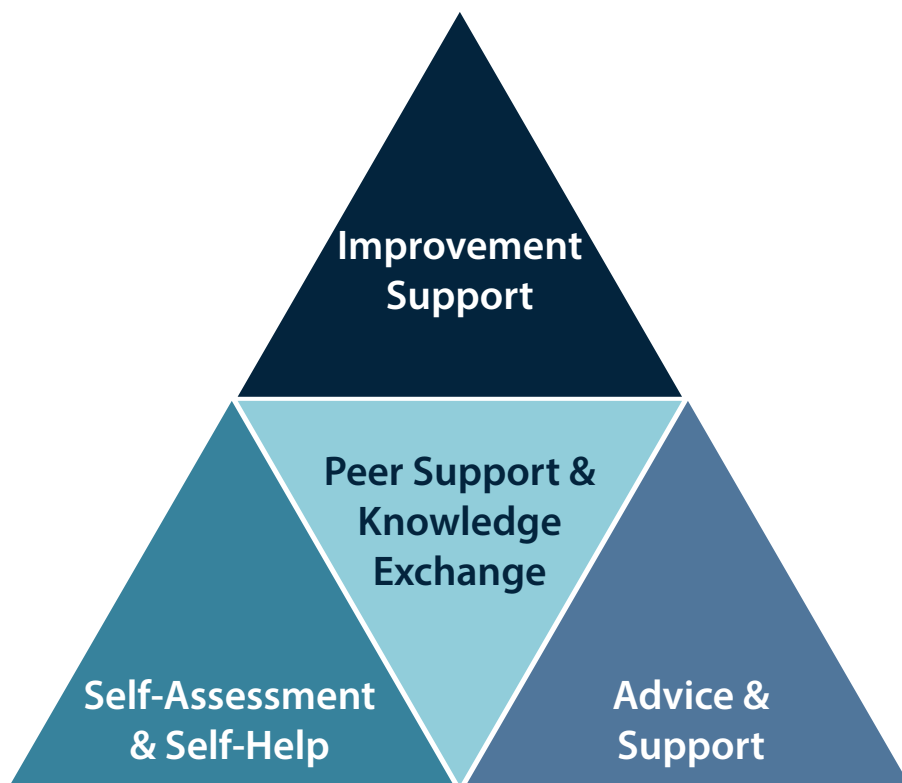
**Article 3** Best interest of the child - In all decisions and actions that concern children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

**Article 2** Non-discrimination

More examples of linking local action to children's rights can be found in Appendix 1.

# 5. Help and support

The Improvement Service has a range of support available to local authorities working to develop their Local Child Poverty Action Reports and to get ready for the incorporation of the UNCRC. Support available includes the opportunity to join Peer Networks, access dedicated knowledge sharing spaces, self-assessment and feedback as well as tailored support to meet your requirements. Visit the webpages below to find out more and to get in touch.



- ▶ [Local Child Poverty Action Reports Project](#)
- ▶ [UNCRC Implementation Project: Putting Children's Rights at the Heart of Local Government](#)

# Appendix 1

## Project Craster in Aberdeen City

In 2019 environmental services launched Project Craster to encourage children in primary schools to learn about environmental responsibility and food poverty. Schools were given the resources needed to grow vegetables and provided with links to videos developed by an in-house team using green screen technology.

Some examples of rights impacted by this project:

- Article 27** Right to an adequate standard of living including nutritious food
- Article 24** Right to the highest attainable physical and mental health including the right to a clean environment and nutritious food
- Article 17** Right to information in a variety of ways
- General Comment 26** Authoritative guidance on how children's rights are impacted by the environmental crisis and what governments must do to uphold these rights.
- Article 29** A child or young person's education should help their mind, body and talents be the best they can. It should also build their respect for other people and the world around them including the environment.

## Mother and Child Recovery House - Dundee City

The Mother and Child Recovery House can host up to 4 women at a time to help them with their drug and alcohol recovery journey. Children, up to the age of five, can stay with their mums during their recovery. Mothers are assisted to stabilise their drug and alcohol to prevent drug deaths of women and avoid children being taken into care and keep families together. The recovery programme encourages mothers to regain control of their lives and create the best possible future for themselves and their young children.

Some examples of rights impacted by this initiative:

- Article 3** Best interest of the child - In all decisions and actions that concern children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
- Article 9** No child should be separated from his or her parents against their will unless it is in the child's best interests.
- Article 26** Right to social security. Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must consider the circumstances of children and their family in assessing their need for assistance.

## Holiday Childcare Hubs - Inverclyde

In Inverclyde the holiday childcare service was delivered during the school holiday period in October 2020, Easter, summer and October 2021. The holiday hubs were open for children and young people aged 5-18 years. The service provided affordable integrated childcare provision and free lunch during school holidays to enable parents and carers to continue work or education during the holidays. The majority of people who accessed the service earned less than £20,000, were lone parent families and predominately women.

Some examples of rights impacted by this initiative:

- Article 2** Non-discrimination. Ensuring that the specific needs of vulnerable groups are met so they can enjoy their rights.
- Article 18** The right to benefit from child-care services and facilities.
- Article 24** Right to the highest attainable physical and mental health including the right to nutritious food.
- Article 26** Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must consider the circumstances of children and their family in assessing their need for assistance.
- Article 27** Every child has the right to a decent standard of living to enable them to grow and develop including the right to nutritious food.
- Article 28 and 29** Right to education. Every child has the right to education. (art. 28) Education should help develop every child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the full. It should develop children's respect for their own rights and those of others, for their parents, for their own culture and the cultures of others, and for the natural environment. (art. 29)

**Article 31** Right to play. Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in cultural and artistic activities.

## System of automated benefits - Argyll and Bute

Welfare Benefits in Argyll and Bute have developed a system of automated benefits that identifies those who should be receiving free school meals and school clothing grants to ensure that families receive the benefits they are entitled to.

Some examples of rights impacted by this initiative:

**Article 3** Best interest of the child - In all decisions and actions that concern children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

**Article 24** Right to the highest attainable physical and mental health including the right to nutritious food.

**Article 26** Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must consider the circumstances of children and their family in assessing their need for assistance.

**Article 27** Every child has the right to a decent standard of living to enable them to grow and develop including the right to nutritious food and clothing.

## Youth participation in decision-making – North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire acknowledges the importance of young people's voices in decisions that affect them. Their approach to youth participation embeds the culture of 'Nothing about us without us' through its robust structure, ensuring that young people's views are heard through a number of platforms, activities and events. In the last reporting period (2021), 12,749 young people were actively involved in youth participation and citizenship. Young people are currently engaging in the digital strategy, mental health provision and support, alcohol and drug education and the cost of the school day.

Some examples of rights impacted by this initiative:



- Article 3** Best interest of the child - In all decisions and actions that concern children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
- Article 12** Respect for children's views - Every child has the right to express their views on matters that affect them, and for these views to be taken into consideration.
- Article 13** Freedom of expression - Every child has the right to find out and distribute information and to express their ideas – through talking, writing, art or any other form of expression.
- Article 29** Education should help develop every child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to the full. It should develop children's respect for their own rights and those of others, for their parents, for their own culture and the cultures of others, and for the natural environment.

