



SUPPORTING
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Putting Children's Rights at
the Heart of your Service

If your service is less familiar with children's rights, knowing where to start can feel daunting. This resource will help you think about different ways that you can consider and embed children's rights in your service.

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Introduction

Public services are designed by adults with adults in mind. Thinking about children and young people as active service users requires a fresh way of thinking to ensure that your service is meeting their needs. Almost all services provided by a local authority are likely to have an impact on children and young people – even if you are not a ‘children’s service’. For example;

- For children to play outside, they need play areas that are well maintained e.g. free of rubbish and grass cut - important roles for ground maintenance services. To safely walk or scoot to school, children need safe crossing points – engaging with colleagues in roads and transport.
- Children often accompany their parents and carers when accessing services as a family, bringing children into adult focused spaces. The reality is that children experience their rights in a range of places, including their home, community, education and health settings and this places a challenge on all public services to think about the ways in which they protect and respect the rights of children and young people.

There are a range of tools and approaches that can help you to understand, demonstrate and improve the way you are taking children’s rights into account in the way you design and deliver your services. Knowing where to start can feel daunting, but this guide will help you get started and provide tools and resources to support you.

Getting Started: The Basics

1. Read the [UNCRC articles](#) that explain each of the rights that a child or young person has – take some time to think about which ones are most relevant to the service you are providing.
2. The Articles in the UNCRC are interdependent meaning they rely on each other to be effective. Ask yourself which articles support each other? For example, can children understand the information available about the service you offer (Article 17)?
3. Does your service **listen to children and young people** when designing or reviewing your service (Article 12)? If they are not involved or listened to, their experiences cannot shape your service.
4. How can children and young people access their **rights across the system** in which your service operates? Fragmented services make it difficult for children and young people to access services and subsequently their rights.

Children's Rights and Trauma Informed Practice

The articles in the UNCRC fall into three broad categories – Protection, Provision and Participation. The services provided by public sector organisations are broad reaching and include both universal and targeted services and supports. Where children and young people face adversity and traumatic life experiences, public services play an important role in responding to need and supporting recovery. A rights respected approach will also respecting the dignity of the individual. Taking a [trauma informed approach](#) to working with children and young people can be an important part of upholding their rights.

A Children's Rights Based Approach

A children's rights-based approach is about placing children's rights at the core of planning and service delivery and integrating children's human rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice. The Children's Commissioner for Wales has outlined five key elements that form a children's human rights-based approach to practice. The Right Way approach is now also being used in Scotland to support children's rights to be embedded in practice.

- ▶ **Embedding:** Putting children's human rights at the core of planning and the delivery of services that affect children and young people.
- ▶ **Equality and non-discrimination:** Ensuring that every child or young person has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
- ▶ **Empowerment:** Giving children the knowledge and confidence to use their rights and hold organisations and individuals that affect their lives to account.
- ▶ **Participation:** Listening to children and taking their views seriously.
- ▶ **Accountability:** Organisations and individuals should be accountable to children for the decisions and actions which affect their lives.

It is important to understand that the UNCRC articles are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. When taking an improvement approach, you can think about the way the rights interact and interconnect – both within your service area and across other services and partnerships. This is important, as understanding rights across services and partnerships is an important element of ensuring they are successfully upheld.

Duty bearers also need to understand which children and young people are least likely to access their rights. This can be due to barriers such as poverty or discrimination. Understanding which rights are 'at risk' of not being fulfilled, helps us to focus limited resources and actions that will have the most impact on improving access to rights.

Example of Practice: The State of Children's Rights Approach 2026

The State of Children's Rights Report 2026 was developed by Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights) to showcase a series of case studies on the implementation of children's rights. The structure for the report uses the key principles of a children's rights approach to demonstrate how each aspect of the approach is important to ensure that children's rights are at the heart of practice. The report presents a practical resource and examples of practice to support the application of a children's rights approach in practice. Read the report: <https://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/resources-and-networks/state-of-childrens-rights-reports/>

Tools to Understand Children's Rights in your Service

Being transparent about how you are embedding children's rights is important. Your existing approach to your service may already take aspects of a children's rights approach into account, however, making explicit reference to relevant UNCRC articles can help you demonstrate your understanding and commitment.

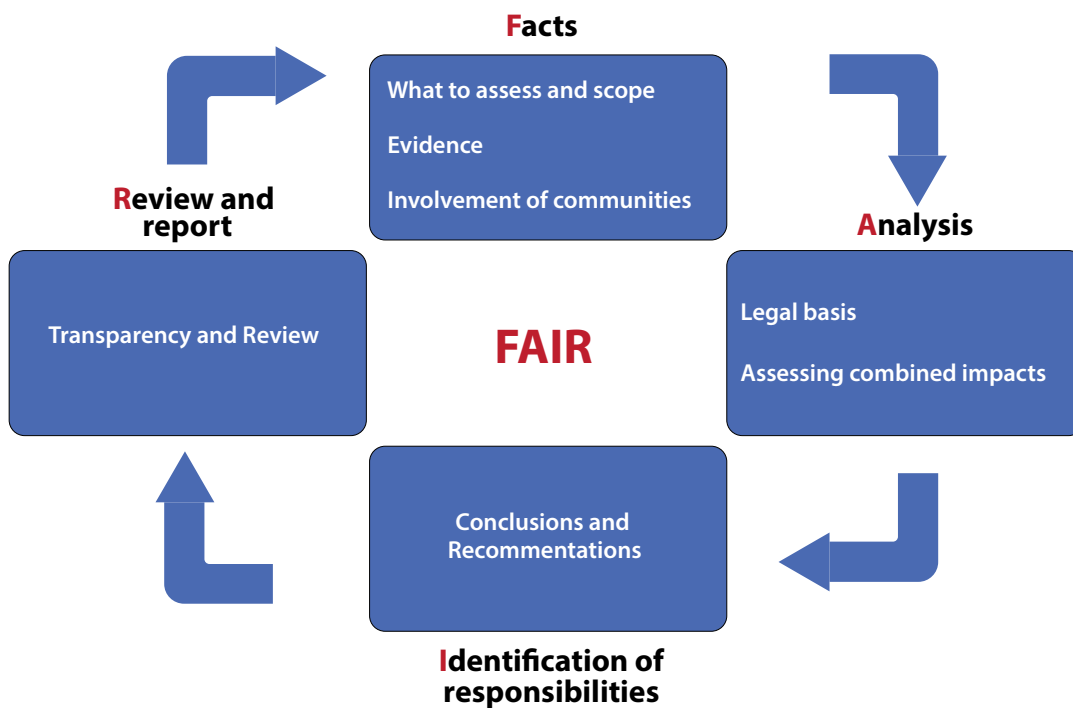
Using a tool or framework such as those outlined below can help you to:

1. Identify which rights your service is upholding and how they are interlinked.
2. Think about how you are listening to children and young people and whether they have a say in decisions that impact them
3. Consider those who are further from their rights e.g. children living in poverty or children with additional needs
4. Actions you may need to take to remove barriers for children and young people that limit/ restrict children and young people accessing your service
5. Be accountable to children and young people for the ways you are embedding rights.

Each of these approaches has a slightly different focus. It is important to choose the tool that will work best for you – considering both the outcome you want to achieve and the resources available to you.

4.1 The FAIR Approach

The '[FAIR approach](#)' was developed by the Scottish Human Rights Commission to support work on embedding human rights. It can also be used to think about the UNCRC articles and your service. For colleagues who are less familiar with the UNCRC, this tool can give them the space to think about the UNCRC in the context of the work that they are doing and understand how they are upholding rights. The process focuses on understanding the experiences of children and young people within services and prioritises action that will continue to respect, protect and fulfil children and young people's rights. The review of actions builds in accountability to ensure that rights continue to be upheld.



Case Study: East Ayrshire Council – Using the FAIR Approach in Practice

The Improvement Service worked with the East Ayrshire UNCRC Champions to support them to understand more about the UNCRC and children’s rights in practice. The UNCRC Champions represent a wide variety of service areas with varying levels of knowledge and experience about children’s rights. Through a series of workshops covering different aspects of children’s rights, the champions agreed that using the FAIR approach would support them to think about children’s rights in their service area. This tool would also help them to identify what further actions were needed to ensure that they were meeting the requirements of the UNCRC (Implementation) (Scotland) Act 2024. They pulled together their own FAIR Template and services from across the local authority have been using the template to examine their practice. These completed templates were an important part of developing their UNCRC Report for 2024-2026. Appendix 2 provides an example of the East Ayrshire IT service completing the FAIR Template for their work on IT hardware and interactive technology supplied through the Capital Programme across East Ayrshire’s school estate. The aim of this service is to ensure equitable access to modern digital technology and guaranteeing that every young learner receives the support they need to thrive in today’s digital learning environment.

More details about the FAIR Approach:

- ▶ To find out more detail about the FAIR approach including further practice examples, visit <https://eqhria.scottishhumanrights.com/eqhriatrainingfair.html>
- ▶ Appendix 1 outlines the key questions that form part of the FAIR approach.
- ▶ Appendix 2 East Ayrshire Fair Approach – Worked Example

4.2 Children’s Rights & Wellbeing Impact Assessment

A Children’s Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) is an internationally recognised approach to understanding the impact of decision making on children’s rights. In Scotland, the approach developed by the Scottish Government also includes consideration of the wellbeing of children and young people- joining up the UNCRC with the principles and aims of the Getting It Right For Every Child policy. These are called Children’s Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA). A CRWIA is a process through which decisions are analysed to identify the ways in which they will impact on children and young people’s wellbeing and rights. Undertaking a CRWIA provides a guided approach to considering rights, the voices of children and young people and the range of evidence available. Importantly the process also includes a recording of the evidence and information considered which can support accountability of duty bearers.

Under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, Scottish Ministers are required to undertake CRWIAs on any proposed policies such as budgetary decisions, new strategies and revision of action plans. While local authorities are not legally required to undertake CRWIAs, they are recognised as an important tool to demonstrate how children’s rights are considered as part of the decision-making process. Many local authorities, combine consideration of children’s rights into their approach an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) process – commonly termed Integrated Impact Assessments. EQIA’s are a legal requirement for local authorities under the Equality Act 2010, and combining the consideration of equality and children’s human rights can strengthen the approach to the consideration of children’s rights where resources are stretched.

Case Study: A Rights Based Approach to Waste Management

In 2023/24, Highland Council was proposing to make changes to its waste and recycling collection system to ensure it was aligned with the national waste policy and the Household Recycling Charter and Code of Practice which seeks to deliver more consistent recycling collections across Scotland.

As this was a significant change, the project leader was asked if they would like to pilot the completion of an Integrated Impact Assessment tool that was being created within the council at the same time. This included a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA). The advice supporting the CRWIA included information on the UNCRC Articles and the process of considering the views of children and young people who may be impacted by the proposed change. The project manager and the subject specialist for children's rights within the council jointly worked through the CRWIA, discussing key aspects of the proposed change and how to mitigate any potential negative impact on children and young people.

One of the proposals within the project was to reduce the size of the general waste (black bin), to encourage more recycling of paper and card (blue bin) and plastics or metals (green bin). This would reduce the amount of landfill and increase recycling but could be an issue for families with young children who might create more waste through disposable nappies etc., and for larger families who would naturally produce more waste. Families of children who have disabilities may also create more waste through pads, nappies or medical waste. They also discussed issues for families who live in smaller houses for storing recycling indoors before putting this in the blue or green bins.

These issues were able to contribute to the council's Household Waste and Recycling Policy, which was reviewed to include these specific needs within families and to inform the additional bin capacity criteria. Having a smaller bin delivered to all households would have disadvantaged these children and families in particular, so mitigations were put in place with families being able to request an additional black bin from the outset and to have their waste collected more regularly, to accommodate the higher level of waste generated.

The policy now states that:

“Additional capacity can be provided to a household where they can demonstrate a need. One additional 140/180l residual wheeled bin and additional 240L dry recycling bins can be provided to a household:

- ▶ with five or more persons in permanent residence;
- ▶ where a householder's medical condition demonstrates a need for additional bin capacity or;
- ▶ where there are two children in nappies
- ▶ In areas which receive the service, one additional 23 litre food waste caddy can also be provided to households meeting these criteria.”

Educational materials were also created for schools to use with pupils to support the sustainable development goals within the curriculum and to encourage recycling from a young age (Article 42). In addition, planned trips for children were proposed to the local recycling plants to support their educational experiences.

As a result, it was hoped that the mitigations would be in the best interests of children in Highland (Article 3) and have a positive impact on children's right to dignity and the best possible healthcare (Article 24), especially those children with disabilities (Article 23). Larger families, families of young children, or those with health care needs or disabilities would not be adversely impacted or discriminated against by this change (Article 2). Children's rights did not feature highly in the thinking or planning of the project prior to these discussions. Being able to articulate the need for mitigation and support for specific families through a children's rights lens provided a different way of looking at some of the issues that may be experienced by some families.

Further Guidance and Examples of Children's Rights Impact Assessment in Practice:

- ▶ [Scottish Government CRWIA Guidance and Templates](#)
- ▶ CRWIA in East Lothian – [Case Study](#)
- ▶ Integrated Impact Assessment – [South Ayrshire Case Study](#)

4.3 The Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, Quality (AAAQ) Framework

The Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, Quality (AAAQ) Framework is a framework that provides a structured criteria for evaluating existing or proposed services. It has been used to focus on identifying the barriers that can limit the realisation of rights within service areas or for particular population groups e.g. infants, children and young people or disabled children and young people. It can also be useful when considering the allocation and effectiveness of budget allocation towards desired or targeted outcomes. While this framework is mainly used in a health context, the framework can also be useful in understanding the application of children's rights within services and settings.

The Framework is built around four key areas for consideration:

- ▶ **Availability:** are services available and sufficient to meet the needs of the population they serve?
- ▶ **Accessibility:** a range of considerations about how accessible the service is, including cost, physical access and location, access to information and non-discrimination. Special consideration must be given to considering the needs of children and young people.
- ▶ **Acceptability:** considering informed consent, dignity and cultural appropriateness.
- ▶ **Quality:** are services safe and effective.

The model presents a series of challenging questions, designed to lead you to consider the factors that can ensure your service area is removing barriers that can make them accessible and rights respecting.

Watch this short video from Public Health Scotland about the AAAQ Framework:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWZn450qH_8

- ▶ Appendix 2 Outlines the Key Process in Using the AAAQ Framework

Additional Resources

There are a range of resources available to help and support your work to embed children's rights. [The Improvement Service UNCRC Implementation Project](#) offers tailored support and resources to local authorities in Scotland. All resources can be accessed via our website.

The [UNCRC Skills and Knowledge Framework](#) outlines a comprehensive approach to developing the skills that are needed by colleagues in different roles across the organisation. You can access the framework free of charge.

Further resources and support about children's rights based approaches are available from:

- ▶ [Scottish Government Children's Rights Unit](#)
- ▶ [Children and Young People's Commissioner](#)
- ▶ [Together Alliance for Children's Rights](#)

For Further Resources to Support a Trauma Informed Approach visit:

- ▶ [Sowing the Seeds: Trauma-informed practice for working with children and young people](#)
- ▶ [Developing your trauma skilled practice: Trauma in children and young people](#) - E-module
- ▶ [Learning report](#) and [videos](#) from the Children & Families deep dive event in 2021
- ▶ [Care experience and trauma-informed practice](#) companion document
- ▶ The [Domestic Abuse](#) companion document.
- ▶ [Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment](#) – Scottish Government Tools and Resources
Guidance is provided by the Scottish Government on how to complete a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Screening Sheet and Impact Assessment (CRWIA). It includes links to useful resources for gathering evidence, involving children and young people in the development of your policy/measure and ensuring decisions are necessary and proportionate.

Appendix 1.

FAIR Approach - Key Questions to Work Through

Step 1 Facts: Define the scope of what you are assessing.

- What evidence do you have about your service e.g. level of service use by children and young people (including by protected characteristic)?
- What are the experiences of children and young people who are using (or want to use) your service?
- What support do children and young people need to engage with the service or have their voice heard?
- What is this information telling you about the way the service is operating?
- Is the dignity of the infant/ child/ young person considered throughout?
- Has a trauma informed approach been taken?
- Consider the budget allocation for the service – are you using the resources available in a manner which upholds rights?

Step 2: Analyse Rights: working through the UNCRC articles, begin to identify which articles are most relevant to your service area.

- What are the human rights/ UNCRC articles at stake?
- Are any rights being restricted? If yes, is this justified and proportionate?
- How are they interlinked? What activity supports you to uphold them?

Step 3: Identify Actions: think about what steps you need to take to improve the experience of rights for children and young people.

- How can children and young people be involved in this?
- Who can be responsible for taking action?

Step 4: Review Actions

- Have the actions been recorded and reviewed?
- Have children and young people been involved in this and informed about the outcome of any participation?

Appendix 2.

East Ayrshire FAIR Template - Worked Example

East Ayrshire's Implementation of UNCRC

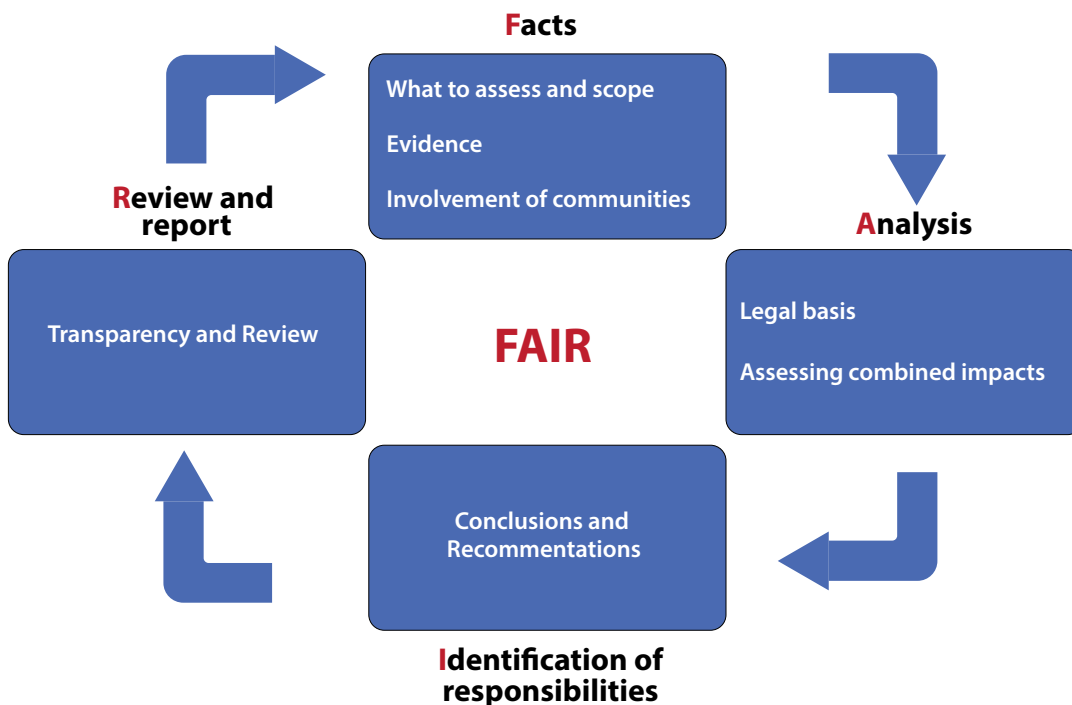
FAIR Approach Template 2026

Facts: What is the experience of those involved and what are the important facts to understand?

Analyse rights: Develop an analysis of the human rights at stake.

Identify responsibilities: Identify what needs to be done and who is responsible for doing it.

Review actions: Make recommendations for action and later recall and evaluate what has happened as a result.



Focus of Example

Please provide an overview of an area within your service that you would like to assess how it aligns to the UNCRC articles on children's rights.

IT hardware and interactive technology supplied through the Capital Programme across East Ayrshire's school estate. Ensuring equitable access to modern digital technology and guaranteeing that every young learner receives the support they need to thrive in today's digital learning environment.

Stage 1: Facts

Guidance notes:

- Think about the services you deliver in your area of work. Choose one area that you can work through as an example.
- With your colleagues, describe the service you are providing. What are the important aspects of this service (e.g. is it a statutory service? Is it a local priority?)
- Think about:
 - Who is using the service?
 - Where is the voice of the child in the service?
 - What is their experience of using the service?
 - What barriers exist in accessing the service?
 - What evidence do we have of the impact of the service on children?

Please provide your response below:

Through the Capital Investment Programme, we deliver a comprehensive digital service that procures, deploys and maintains devices such as laptops, desktops, Chromebooks and tablets across all our schools, ensuring equitable device ratios and consistent access to modern technology. Each classroom is equipped with a Promethean Interactive Panel to enhance learning and teaching. Crucially, the voice of the child directly shapes this service. Learners contribute through digital surveys, pupil councils, device pilots and everyday classroom feedback, offering valuable insight into the tools and approaches that best support their learning. This pupil voice informs decisions around device selection, accessibility features and future procurement decisions. However, rising device costs and centrally

constrained budgets present significant challenges, making it increasingly difficult to maintain equitable device ratios and refresh equipment in line with demand. In response, the IT team works proactively to maximise hardware support lifespans, extending the usability of devices through careful maintenance and phased refresh strategies ensuring resources are used responsibly and sustainably. Despite these pressures, the service continues to prioritise reliability, inclusion and digital equity, ensuring that children’s digital experiences within East Ayrshire promote positive development.

Stage 2: Analysis of rights at stake

Guidance notes:

- What are the human rights/UNCRC rights at stake? Identify the UNCRC Articles that you can apply to your service.
- Is the right to life or the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment at stake? If so, these rights are absolute and cannot be restricted.
- Can the right be restricted? What is the justification for restricting the right?
- Is the restriction on the right ‘proportionate’? (i.e. is it the minimum necessary restriction to meet the aim or is a “sledgehammer being used to crack a nut”?)
- How are the rights you have identified inter-dependent?

Please provide your response below:

Our device-management approach is designed to uphold key human rights and UNCRC entitlements, particularly Article 3 (best interests of the child), Article 16 (right to privacy) and Articles 12, 13, 17 and 23, which relate to participation, access to information, and support for children with additional needs.

All devices are configured in line with rigorous security and safeguarding standards to protect young people from harmful online content and cyber-threats (Articles 6 and 19). Although measures such as internet filtering, activity monitoring and data-protection controls place minimal limitations on privacy, these restrictions are tightly scoped, proportionate, and justified by the need to maintain a safe digital environment for our learners.

We continuously review accessibility and operating-system updates to provide a safe, adaptable digital environment. This supports Article 23, ensuring that reasonable enablements are put in place so children who

use assistive technology such as switch controls, eye-tracking systems or augmentative and alternative communication can participate fully. We work closely with colleagues, Education Scotland and GLOW to ensure access to language-specific keyboards, speech-generating tools and other enabling technologies, supporting Articles 12, 13 and 17 by promoting expression, communication and access to information.

Through partnership working, we also deliver targeted professional learning for teachers, classroom assistants and digital leads. This ensures staff can meet the diverse needs of our young people and strengthens the inter-dependence of rights protection, participation, education, inclusion and accessibility. By embedding rights based practice across device deployment, accessibility planning and staff development, we ensure that the digital experience supports the wellbeing, dignity and full participation of every learner.

Stage 3: Identification of shared responsibilities

Guidance notes:

- What future actions do we intend to take to build on strengths, address weaknesses or target children furthest from having their rights met?
- Who has responsibilities for helping to make the necessary changes?
- How can this be considered as part of the budget decision process?

Please provide your response below:

To continue building on our strengths and address areas for development, we will ensure that every new device or model procured through the Scottish Government ICT frameworks remains suitable, durable, sustainable and fully aligned with the needs of our young people. Each piece of hardware and software will be systematically reviewed to confirm its support for the Curriculum for Excellence, the Scottish Digital Strategy, the eSafety Action Plan and all relevant data-protection legislation.

A key future action will be to formalise a robust pupil-voice mechanism through our digital lead groups, enabling children and young people particularly those furthest from having their rights met to influence decision-making and provide direct feedback into cluster meetings.

Clear responsibilities will sit across senior education colleagues, IT services, digital leads, practitioners and learners themselves, ensuring shared ownership of improvement. These priorities will be embedded

within the emerging 3–18 Digital Strategy, which is being co-developed by practitioners and shaped by the views of pupils, parents and staff. To ensure long-term sustainability, all proposed actions and initiatives will be explicitly considered within the budget-setting process, allowing resources to be allocated transparently and equitably to support digital inclusion and uphold children's rights.

Stage 4: Review actions (transparency)

Guidance notes:

- Have the actions taken been recorded and reviewed and has the individual affected been involved?
- How can feedback be given to those who shared feedback and suggestions with you?

Please provide your response below:

All device ratios, allocations and associated actions are fully recorded within our central asset register, shared with establishment leaders and reviewed through an annual audit process to ensure transparency and accuracy. These records, along with project plans and proposed service developments, are routinely discussed with senior IT and education colleagues prior to each new financial year, ensuring that decision making is informed, collaborative and aligned with identified needs. We continuously verify that all devices meet current technical and security requirements set by external vendors such as Microsoft, Google and Apple, confirming that they support the latest updates and accessibility standards. Each time an operating system is updated, we review new features and settings including those that may impact learners with additional needs piloting changes in selected classrooms to involve practitioners and pupils directly in evaluating their impact. Feedback loops are built into cluster meetings, where updates, new features and outcomes of pilots are shared with staff, enabling those

who provided suggestions or raised issues to see how their input has shaped improvements.

Next Steps

Guidance notes:

Next steps your team will take to enhance rights-based practice across your

service.

Please provide your response below:

To strengthen rights-based practice across our service, IT will support education colleagues to continue to embed structured pupil-voice into all digital decision making, ensuring that all learners have meaningful influence over device use, accessibility features and future developments.

We will also maintain and monitor the minimum device ratios set centrally to meet the digital needs of all learners across the authority, ensuring equitable access to technology.

Expanding classroom pilots to involve a wider range of pupils, establishing

clear feedback loops and integrating rights-based impact assessments into procurement, security and data-handling processes will further help ensure every digital decision promotes inclusion, wellbeing and fairness.

Appendix 3.

AAAQ Framework Questions

1. Availability: Are services sufficient and available to meet the needs of the population they serve? What data can you access that can help you to understand this demand?

2. Accessibility: There are a range of factors that can be considered under this heading.

- ▶ Physical Accessibility: Are facilities located within a reasonable distance? Is the route to and from the facility safe to travel for infants, children and young people? Are there other barriers such as lack of street lighting that deter people from coming to the location?
- ▶ Financial accessibility: How is the service funded? Is any fee reasonable/ manageable given the economic circumstances/means and age of those who need to access this service? What other indirect costs are associated with the service (such as transport)? Is childcare a barrier for families trying to access the service?
- ▶ Bureaucratic/administrative accessibility: Are there procedural steps that must be completed before accessing certain services? For example, is a particular kind of registration required? Does accessing relevant information require a bank account, internet access, mobile phone, etc that could prove a barrier to those on lower incomes, those with no recourse to public funds or young people who seek to access the service independently? What level of literacy and/or numeracy is needed to access information about the service – is the information age appropriate? Are the facilities open at times that are convenient for families and children and young people to attend?
- ▶ Social accessibility: Do service providers respect non-discrimination in the provision of services? Are certain groups excluded from services because of language barriers? Are there female frontline workers (including translators/ interpreters, if necessary)? Are there any risks of stigma related to a person being seen in/around a certain facility? Are other responsibilities, such as childcare, affecting certain individuals' ability to access services?
- ▶ Information accessibility: How is information about services communicated to the community, including children and young people? Are dissemination and content of the information accessible to those who need it, for example in various languages, formats (i.e. radio, drama, outreach, print etc.)? Is personal information treated confidentially?

3. Acceptability: Are services respectful of different cultures and identities? Do services respect confidentiality and informed consent from children and young people? Do services protect and uphold the dignity of service users, including infants, children and young people?

4. Quality: Are services safe, effective and suitable for those who need them? Are service providers appropriately trained and have the skills that are needed? Is the environment appropriate for infants, children and young people, non-discriminatory, private and confidential? Quality also extends to the way people are treated before, during and after accessing the services that they need, with trauma informed practice in place throughout the process.

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