

Children's Rights

It's every child's right not to be bullied. Children's rights are unique in that many of them, although designed for the safety and protection of children, have to be provided for by adults and the government.

Although children and young people are covered under the Human Rights Act 1998, their rights are more clearly specified under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Although neither specifically mentions bullying, bullying behaviour does breach a number of the articles in both. Alongside this, both outline the responsibilities of adults to protect and safeguard children and young people from bullying behaviour.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC)

There are 54 articles in the Convention, setting standards in healthcare, education, and legal, civil and social services, which cover four broad areas. These areas are:

- Survival rights
- Development rights
- Protection rights
- Participation rights

A right is a basic need, rather than an entitlement or expectation. Children need to be protected from bullying behaviour so that they can survive, develop and participate in a fulfilling life. Bullying is a breach of Children's Rights.

Bullying and the UNCRC

Survival Rights

Survive and develop healthily – The impacts of bullying behaviour must be addressed in a way that meets the needs of those young people affected and involved. Adults share a responsibility to address any behaviour that can harm the development of children.

What you need to be happy and healthy – The positive impact of healthy relationships, supportive role-models, inclusion, love and respect can be undermined by bullying behaviour. Teaching children how to value and promote a healthy sense of respect for themselves and others will help reduce the risk of bullying behaviour.

Development Rights

Relax and play – Being excluded from activities by bullying behaviour has a harmful impact on development, health and wellbeing. As adults we are responsible for shaping an inclusive culture where all children can participate.

Get and share information – Bullying and its impacts can be detrimental to a child's capacity to learn. This right also highlights an adult's responsibility to take young people's views into account when making decisions that affect them.

Free primary education – A child's right to education can be denied if they refuse to attend or are removed from school because of bullying behaviour. Staff and parents have a responsibility to change behaviour that is making a child feel unsafe.

Develop your talents fully – The impact of bullying on self-esteem and aspirations can prevent young people from reaching their full potential.

Participation Rights

Be listened to, opinions heard – Young people's views must be considered when responding to bullying behaviour. Exclusion can also impact on this right.

When situations require adults to go against a child's wishes – for example when there is serious risk of harm - there is a clear responsibility to help a child understand that their best interests are at heart.

Practice your religion – Bullying behaviour stemming from prejudices can devalue a child's beliefs. Children have a responsibility to respect the beliefs of others and adults have an important role to play in encouraging this, while strongly challenging prejudice-based attitudes and actions.

Meet together and join groups – A culture of bullying can prevent young people from engaging in their chosen activities. It is not fair or healthy to ask a child or young person to change their behaviour to avoid bullying as anything other than a short-term measure. The focus needs to be on changing the bullying behaviour that threatens this right.

Privacy and their way of life – Cyberbullying is an example of an invasion of privacy. An important adult responsibility is to give children the skills and understanding to respect their own privacy as well as that of others.

Your own name – Name-calling and negative labelling can deny children this right. A child's capacity to develop their sense of self can be undermined by name-calling or by conforming to bullying behaviour by labelling themselves in a derogatory way.

Protection Rights

Be cared for by parents and government – Quality of care can be undermined by a failure to address bullying behaviour and its impacts. Children are very clear about the significant impact and concern bullying causes them and this must be reflected by the policy, culture and practice of organisations responsible for their care.

Protection from violence and abuse & Be protected from harm – Children and young people have a right to be protected from bullying behaviour – a protection that all adults in their lives, regardless of their roles, share a responsibility to provide.

What is best for children from child care organisations – All organisations have a duty to provide a safe, healthy environment for children where bullying is unacceptable. This responsibility must not be a burden heaped on a few individuals – but rather understood and shared by all staff.

Special help if neglected or abused – All young people have a right to the support they need to recover from bullying behaviour. Every child is different and so adults have a responsibility to recognise the importance of an individual journey of recovery, informed by the young person concerned.

For further information on the UNCRC and Children's Rights [CLICK HERE](#)

