



Realising Children's Rights

Respecting Children's Rights

York has committed to become a **Children's Rights Respecting City**. This means we want all children and young people to understand their rights, to have a voice and to realise their rights.

This toolkit is designed to help introduce the concept of children's rights with children and young people. The toolkit suggests using an Appreciative Inquiry approach to agree what you, your service and children and young people will do to realise children's rights.

When we say children's rights we mean as set out in the [United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#). This relates to all principles set out by the UN Convention on Rights of the Child, with a focus on the four 'general principles' of:

- Non-discrimination (article 2)
- Best interest of the child (article 3)
- Right to life survival and development (article 6)
- Right to be heard (article 12)

For more information visit:

saferchildrenyork.org.uk

Why children's rights matter

All organisations working with children should prioritise the development of approaches that support children's rights.

Upholding children's rights ensures their overall well-being, protection, and creates a safe environment for their growth and development. It also empowers children, allowing them to have a voice and participate in decision-making processes.

For organisations, prioritising children's rights enhances their reputation, evidences good practice to regulators, improves program effectiveness, and demonstrates a commitment to accountability and ethical practice.

By embracing children's rights, organisations create a positive impact on children's lives and society as a whole.

Using this toolkit

We are asking you to use this toolkit with children and young people as a way to:

- Introduce the idea of children's rights and prompt discussion and reflection of them for your service.
- To take a strengths based approach to understand what is working well.
- To develop a vision of how things could be different and rights better understood and delivered.
- Focusing on the first step towards developing a rights based approach and realising the benefits this brings.

Planning your sessions

It is important to plan your use of the toolkit over a few sessions. When we tested the toolkit we found people need time to take on board new ideas and information about children's rights and then moving through the process towards action. We have put below a suggested structure for using the toolkit in a way that deliver the biggest impact and change.

Step One - Preparation

Before using the toolkit plan out your sessions. Think about who you will be using the toolkit with and model how each stage can work. For it to be most effective people need time to understand what children's rights are before they can begin to move into planning.

You can adapt how you use the toolkit in any way that will work for the young people you are engaging. There are almost endless possibilities for how to engage children and young people and work in joint partnership. For ideas and resources to help use this toolkit look at our online participation guide (york.gov.uk/ChildrensRightsToolkit).

Step Two - Exploring and Discovering

Don't try to fit too much in the first session. The focus should be on introducing children and young people to the concept of children's rights. There are lots of different exercises you can use to help with this. Take a look in the 'Introducing the CRC and rights' section in the online guide accompanying this toolkit. (york.gov.uk/ChildrensRightsToolkit).

Your aim at the end of this session is people have begun to develop an understanding of children's rights. Depending on the group you are working with you may also want to move into the Discovery phase and begin to review how well or otherwise your service is doing in relation to children's rights.

A good option is to give people a chance to reflect on the content of this session and set people a task to complete before the next time you meet. This would be to reflect on what they have learnt about children's rights and 'discover' what is working well. Starting with strengths and what is working well gives people something to build on. The task between sessions is to:

Before the next session identify a small number of articles in the UNCRC that you think we do really well and think about why that is the case. Why did you pick those over others?

Step Three - Dream

Whether you completed the Discovery phase in the previous session or not it is always helpful to start the Dream session revisiting that.

If you have already done the Discovery phase it gives people a chance to remind themselves of what was discussed. It may be since the session they have thought more deeply about rights and your service. Spend time at the beginning of the session making sure people are comfortable in their understanding of children's rights and where they think this is working well and where it needs to be developed.

If you set the gap task in the previous session then give more time for people to share and discuss the rights they have identified.

This means everyone should be in the right place to move into the Dream phase. The Dream phase should be ambitious and you should encourage people to not dismiss ideas too quickly as unachievable. Allow space to explore and 'Dream' of the ideal outcome. The task in this session is to:

Look at the rights you picked as priorities. What would your service be like if these priorities were improved? What would feel different?

Step Four - Design

The focus of this session is to move on from the Dream phase. This takes the outcome of the Dream phase and begins to move it towards something you can commit to actually doing.

For this session help the group to answer the following questions:

- What should happen to improve the priorities you picked?
- What will help you to achieve what you set out in the Dream stage
- What will you do to help improve this?

Depending on your group and the time you have available you could consider combining Step Three and Step Four. Testing of the toolkit suggests giving people time works best but adapt as needed for your group.

Step Five - Destiny

This is the final session in the cycle and the aim should be to try to bring real focus to what people are actually going to do next.

By now people should have a good understanding of children's rights, what is working well and why, what areas need to be developed further. They should also understand what the dream outcome would feel like and some practical steps that could achieve that.

The final session should be focussed on you arriving at a clear and achievable set of plans.

Choose one thing you are going to do to make your service a rights-respecting service. Can you make a pledge to tell other people about children's rights? Can you find out more about rights?

The idea here is focus on the first steps you take. Don't lose sight of the Dream outcome but think about where people can start. Make sure to capture this in your team or service plans. Choose a small number of practical actions that will help you achieve your goal. Also make sure you agree how you will keep this alive once the session has finished. Try and integrate it into your existing plans, team meetings, activities, supervision etc.

Step Six - Review

At some point possible after six months or a year repeat this exercise from beginning to end. You will have some people who have started and left and would benefit from taking part. It also acts as a helpful way to reflect and evaluate what has worked well and the progress you have made. It also helps you to focus on the next steps and next priorities to improve further.

If you would like any support with using the toolkit or adapting how you engage with children and young people then please contact us on childrenservicefeedback@york.gov.uk.

Dream – What could York be like

Look at the rights you picked as priorities. What would your service be like if these priorities were improved? What would feel different?

Design – Making things better

What should happen to improve the priorities you picked? What will you do to help improve this?

Destiny – Make York a rights-respecting city

What should happen to improve the priorities you picked? What will you do to help improve this?

When you have completed the toolkit please send us a copy to:
childrenservicefeedback@york.gov.uk

We want to understand how well the toolkit is working and to showcase rights based work with children and young people.



Get in touch

Email us at: CYSCP@york.gov.uk
Or visit: saferchildrenyork.org.uk

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please call (01904) 551550, or email ycc@york.gov.uk