



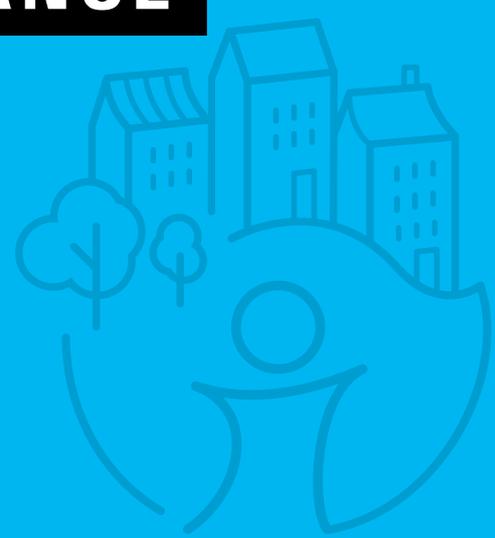
CHILD
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CITIES &
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**CHILD RIGHTS IMPACT
ASSESSMENT
TEMPLATE AND GUIDANCE
FOR LOCAL
AUTHORITIES**



July 2021

CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES & COMMUNITIES IS A UK COMMITTEE FOR UNICEF (UNICEF UK) PROGRAMME THAT WORKS WITH COUNCILS TO PUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS INTO PRACTICE.

The programme aims to create cities and communities in the UK where all children – whether they are living in care, using a children's centre, or simply visiting their local library – have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives.

The programme is part of **Child Friendly Cities** – a global UNICEF initiative launched in 1996 that reaches more than 30 million children in close to 50 countries.

In the UK, we provide training based on the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** and support councils, their partners, and children and young people, as they work together on an ambitious three-to-five-year journey towards international recognition as a UNICEF UK Child Friendly City or Community.

For more information visit unicef.org.uk/cfc

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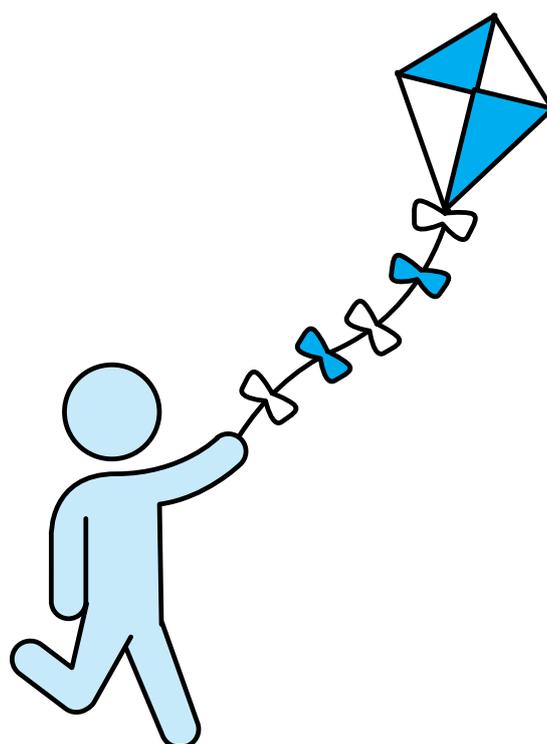
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This guidance has been produced by the [UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme \(CFC\)](#).

It has been developed for the local authorities (LAs) taking part in the programme but is suitable for use by staff in any LA.



1. BACKGROUND

The [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) is a core human rights instrument and the most widely ratified of all international treaties. The UK Government ratified the UNCRC in 1991.

All children have the same rights as adults under human rights treaties, but only the UNCRC formulates these rights within the framework of children's lives and experiences.

Children's rights cover every aspect of a child or young person's life from birth up to the age of 18. They exist wherever the child is: at home, at school, in an institution, or in the community. And they apply whatever the status of the child: whether they are citizens, migrants, local residents or visitors.

Children's rights recognise that children are key actors in their own development. They are **rights holders** whose ability to enjoy their rights can be held back by attitudinal and structural barriers that need to be identified and adjusted. The **duty bearers** within the human rights framework are those responsible for making policies, developing strategies, implementing legislation, and designing and delivering services. They are also responsible for making adjustments to attitudinal and structural barriers, preferably with the direct involvement of children.

A child rights impact assessment (CRIA) is one of the general measures of implementation of the UNCRC.

Under the UNCRC, all levels of government and those delivering public services (including those commissioned from the voluntary or private sectors) must ensure that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all actions concerning children. But no one can know whether this principle is being fulfilled without a child-specific impact assessment and monitoring process in place.

The Welsh and Scottish Governments have introduced different models of CRIA (CRWIA in the case of Scotland) in order to help them meet children's rights duties under domestic law (Section 1 of the Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure 2011 [Wales]; and Part 1 of the Children and Young People Act 2014 [Scotland]). The UK Government has also introduced a CRIA template for officials to supplement online training in the UNCRC. Neither is mandatory.

This guidance provides information, advice and a standard CRIA template that has been developed by the [UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities & Communities \(CFC\)](#) programme specifically for local government and its partners.



2. WHAT IS A CHILD RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

A CRIA is a tool that can be used to mainstream children's rights principles and the articles of the UNCRC into strategic planning and commissioning, policy development, problem-solving, programme prioritisation, budget-setting, and service design, delivery and evaluation.

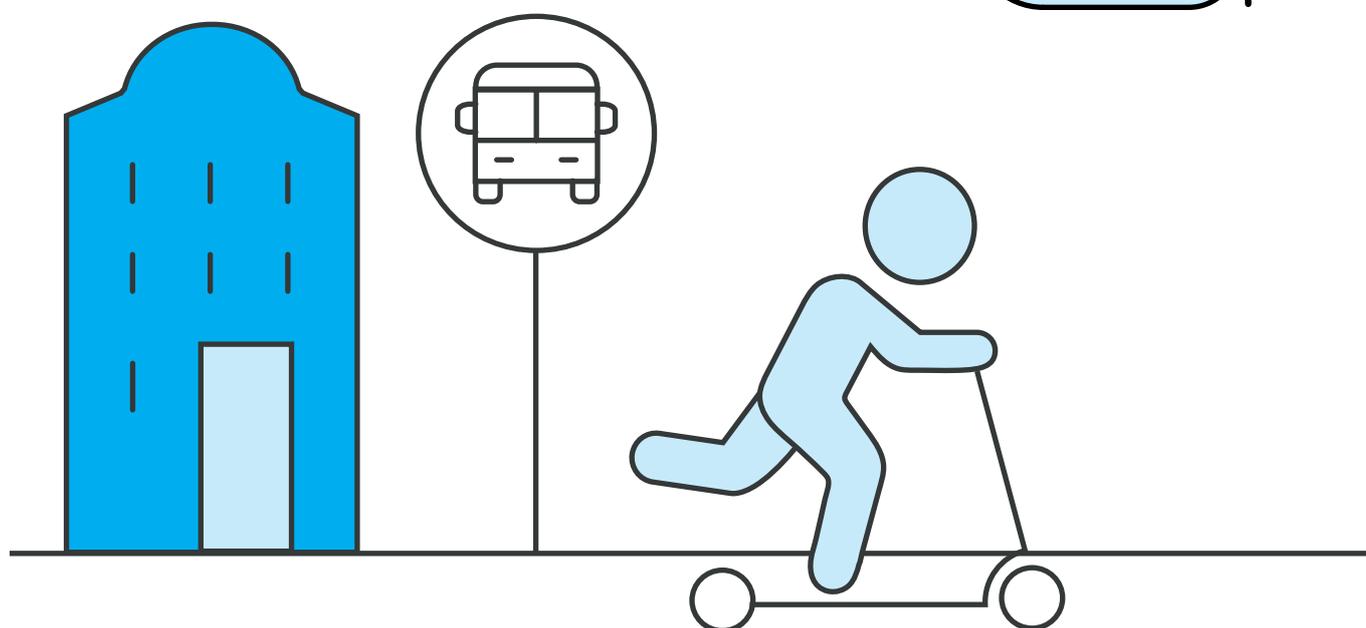
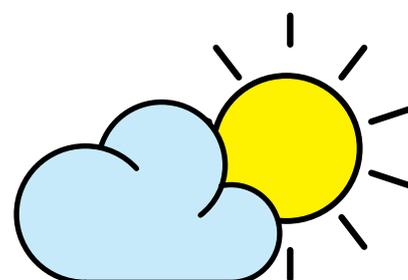
A CRIA sets out what children and young people should be able to expect from local government and its partners. It looks at proposals through a 'child rights lens', measuring the impact on children against the articles of the UNCRC.

CRIAs are not political documents. They are meant to be used as a strategy, policy, programme or service development tool which provides evidence-based, impartial advice to those making decisions.

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF ASSESSMENT:

The first provides local government and its partners the opportunity to examine the **potential impacts** on children of policies, programmes and services as they are being developed and, if necessary, avoid or mitigate any negative impacts.

The second is part of the review process. It provides an opportunity to evaluate the **actual impacts** (intended and unintended) of those policies, programmes or services after a defined and agreed period of time. Based on the assessment, if necessary, the policies, programmes or services should be revised or refined to ensure they support the delivery of children's rights.



CRIA: A QUICK GUIDE

A CRIA provides for the systematic consideration of the direct or indirect impact of local decisions on either an individual child, specific groups of children, or children generally – often with a focus on the most vulnerable or marginalised.

It involves **meaningful participation and engagement with children and young people**, with structures in place to enable this throughout the process, including feedback and review mechanisms.

It promotes **cross-departmental communication and cross-agency working** to ensure the impact on the whole child is considered.

It is evidence-based, summarising both the **quantitative and qualitative evidence** that is available that is relevant to the proposal under consideration. It can also identify where gaps in the evidence base exist.

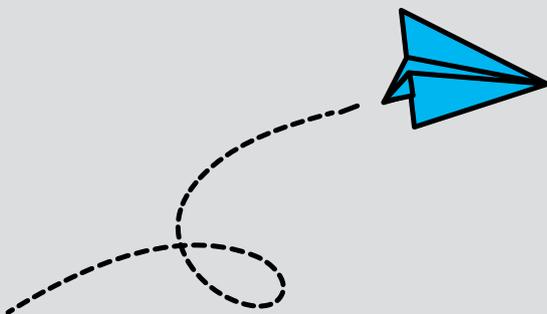
In particular, it should refer to research data on the **views and experiences of children who will be affected by the policy/programme**, as well as that of other stakeholders, or trigger a consultation or the commissioning of further research to ensure an informed assessment can be made.

Based on evidence, it **assesses the impact(s)** of the proposal.

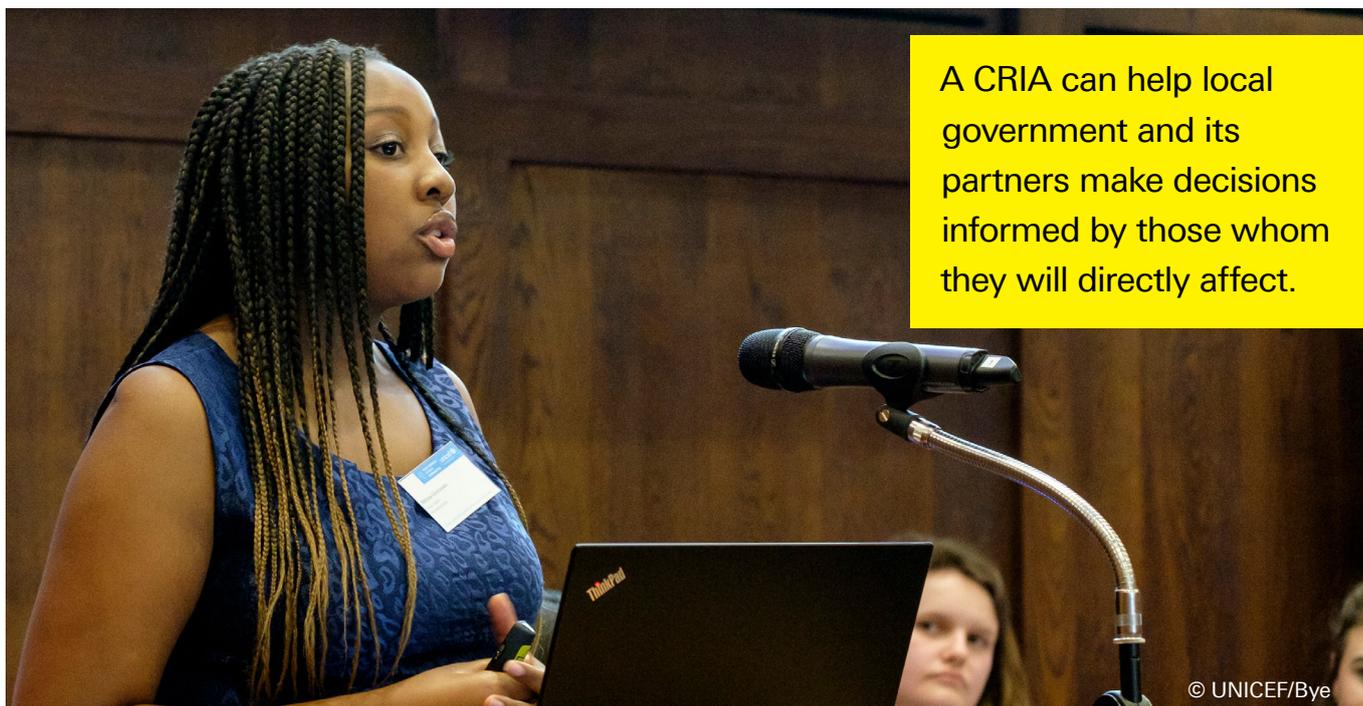
- Impacts can be **positive, negative or neutral**;
- Impacts can be **short, medium or long-term**;
- Impacts can **vary for different groups of children**, and in these cases the CRIA should identify these differential impacts and advise how the **competing interests** of different groups of children, or of children and other stakeholder groups, should be dealt with.

One of the core purposes of doing a CRIA is to **present a range of policy/programme/service options that would comply with and/or better realise children's rights**. The resource implications of each option should be set out to aid decision-making.

CRIAs include a **monitoring and review** mechanism. Ideally, a CRIA is an ongoing process which prompts revisiting the strategy, policy or programme after a period of time specified in the CRIA to ensure that the original aims have been met whilst respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of children affected by the proposal.



3. WHY DO A CHILD RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT?



A CRIA can help local government and its partners make decisions informed by those whom they will directly affect.

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International evidence shows:

- Children are largely excluded from public decision-making processes, with no voting ability and limited power or space to speak on their own behalf
- Responsibility for children tends to be fragmented across departments and agencies, and their visibility in official processes is low
- Children make more use of and depend more on public services than adults – and there is a high probability of adverse effects on children when those services fail
- Children have less access to complaints mechanisms, remedy and redress

A CRIA can help local government and its partners:

- Raise the profile of children's issues locally
- Make children 'visible' in decision-making processes that affect them
- Raise awareness and understanding of children's rights and the UNCRC within local government and partner agencies, as well as the local child and adult population
- Bring research evidence and analysis to bear on local decisions that affect children, and build the evidence base
- Provide greater clarity about budget allocations that impact on/support children
- Make decisions informed by those whom they will directly affect
- Improve cross-departmental and cross-sectoral coordination by considering impacts upon the whole child, rather than just a particular programme or service
- Increase the legitimacy of, and public support for, local government decisions through greater transparency by publishing CRIAs, thereby providing a record of the deliberations that took place, the process itself, the conclusions reached, and the evidence on which those decisions were based

4 BEFORE YOU BEGIN

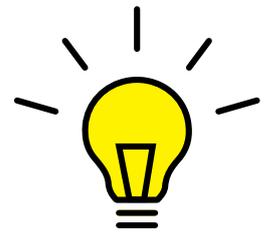


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4.1 DEVELOPING A LOCAL CHILD RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

To ensure the successful implementation of a CRIA in local government, local areas will need to prepare for its introduction by agreeing some parameters, and by following the basics of effective impact assessment practice, ideally setting these out in a local CRIA framework document.

ELEMENTS OF A LOCAL CRIA FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT



- Set out a **clear and agreed purpose** for CRIAs in the local area, and make sure this is widely known.
- Be clear about **what kinds of decisions should be subject to a CRIA** – will they be undertaken for strategic planning and commissioning purposes, budget-setting, programme or service development and delivery? Will they be undertaken for new strategies and plans, or also refreshed strategies and plans? Will they focus on children’s programmes/services, or any programme/service area that may affect children? Will they prioritise vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people who tend to make the most use of local services?
- **Specify who will be expected to undertake CRIAs** (local government policy/programme leads, commissioners, service providers, or a cross-sectoral team).
- Recognise the **resource implications of doing a CRIA**, and build them into the process (for example staff time, the costs of commissioning additional research, the costs of carrying out public or targeted consultations).
- Have access to a **central team** who are familiar with children’s rights, the UNCRC and the CRIA process itself, and who can provide information, advice and support to their colleagues, and help them see and assess the policy or proposal through a ‘child rights lens’.
- **Provide training and support on CRIAs and the UNCRC*** to those undertaking CRIAs. They should have an understanding of children’s rights, not just a familiarity with the procedure for undertaking a CRIA ([see page 10 on understanding children’s rights](#)).
- **Begin a CRIA as early as possible** in the strategy, policy, budget-setting, programme or service development process – timing is a critical factor in whether or not the CRIA will genuinely inform decision-making.
- **Use a template/checklist** to provide replicable steps to guide those undertaking CRIAs through the process ([see page 13 for a CRIA template](#)).
- Know where to **access up-to-date, comprehensive and reliable local and comparative data**.
- **Ensure children’s views and experiences form a fundamental part of the CRIA** by establishing frameworks and systems that allow them to input at the start of the process and regularly and consistently from them on. Where their voices and experiences are missing, establish criteria for when participation and engagement work should be undertaken (based, for example, on the significance of the impact, number of children affected, level of vulnerability of those affected or whether it involves a major new initiative). **Provide training and support on meaningfully engaging with children and young people** to those undertaking CRIAs*.
- **Open up the CRIA to external scrutiny** through stakeholder involvement as part of the evidence-gathering process and through the publication of the CRIA. A CRIA can act as a public record of how decisions have been reached.

*For more information on UNICEF UK training in children’s rights, CRIAs, and participation and engagement with children and young people contact cfc@unicef.org.uk

4.2 UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS: CHILD RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AS PART OF A CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms to which we are all entitled in order to live with dignity, equality and fairness, and to develop and reach our potential. All children have the same rights as adults under human rights treaties, but only the UNCRC formulates these rights within the framework of children’s lives and experiences.

National, regional and local government are expected to do everything they can to implement the UNCRC and make sure decisions which impact on children not only comply with the Convention but, where possible, give better effect to children’s human rights.

A **child rights-based approach (CRBA)** (see image below), developed by the UNICEF UK Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme and used by its partner local authorities, brings together the articles of the UNCRC **and** the international human rights framework to offer a practical approach to working with and for children and young people.

It places children and young people at the centre of services, empowers them and their families, and improves the ability of local government and its partners to understand, consider and fulfil their obligations under the UNCRC.



A CRIA SHOULD BE ASSESSED AGAINST:

■ **The seven principles of a child rights-based approach (CRBA).**

At its core is the concept of human **dignity** – the principle that each child is a unique person with intrinsic worth who should be respected and valued in all circumstances. Rights are **interdependent**, so the fulfilment of one right often depends on the fulfilment of other rights; and they are **indivisible**, so each child enjoys all rights enshrined in the UNCRC, whatever their circumstances. As duty bearers, local government and its partners need to be **transparent and accountable** to children and young people. Having dependable, open and accountable relationships and dialogue between local government, communities, families and children and young people is essential in the collective goal of securing children's rights. A CRBA also incorporates the **four general principles of the UNCRC**. These are not only rights in themselves, but underpin every other right in the Convention: for rights to be applied without discrimination (**Article 2**); for the best interests of the child to be a primary consideration (**Article 3**); the right to life, survival and development (**Article 6**); and the right to express a view and have that view respected (**Article 12**).

■ **Article 5 of the UNCRC** which introduces the concept of a child's '**evolving capacities**' which, while recognising governments' obligation to respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers, must take into account the child's increasing capacity to exercise rights on their own behalf.

■ **The individual rights for all children as set out in the UNCRC** – the right to education, health, play and recreation; an

adequate standard of living; privacy, information and freedom of assembly; to be safe. Alongside rights for children who require special protection and assistance, such as disabled children; victims of trafficking, abuse or exploitation; migrant children; children in the youth justice system; or children in care (see [Annex 1](#) for an overview of the articles of the UNCRC).

■ **The Optional Protocol* to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography**

which prohibits modern slavery, child prostitution and child pornography, and requires public agencies to protect and provide appropriate support to victims.

■ **The General Comments** published by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which provide guidance on the interpretation of the articles of the UNCRC (see [Annex 2](#) for a complete list of the General Comments).

■ **The Concluding Observations** of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: a review of the implementation of the UNCRC in the UK and recommendations to the UK Government for improvement (the most recent being in 2016).

*Optional Protocols are additions to an existing treaty. Although there are three Optional Protocols to the UNCRC, the UK Government has ratified only the first two: the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

5 TEMPLATE AND GUIDANCE



5.1 CHILD RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

A CRIA follows three stages, each comprising a set of key questions that guide you through the impact assessment process. These can be found in the template on the next page.

The final section of the template provides a suggested checklist of what you should include in any published CRIA.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRIA TEMPLATE

STAGE 1: PURPOSE

1. What is the strategy/policy/programme/service? Summarise its overall aims and any aims specific to children.
2. What aspects will affect children and young people up to the age of 18?
3. Who will it affect? Which groups of children and young people?

STAGE 2: BUILD AND ASSESS

4. Which [UNCRC articles](#) are relevant to the strategy/policy/service/programme?
5. What is the likely/actual impact? Is it positive, negative or neutral? [If a negative impact is assessed for any area of rights or any group of children and young people, you must list and recommend options to modify the proposal or mitigate the impact]
6. How will the strategy/policy/service/programme deliver, support and promote children's rights?

STAGE 3: VOICE AND EVIDENCE

7. How do you know? What is your evidence?
8. Have you sourced and included the views and experiences of children and young people?
9. How do you plan to review the strategy/policy/service/programme to ensure it respects, protects and fulfils children's rights?

Suggested list of contents for a published CRIA

- Description of the strategy/policy/service/programme
- Scope of the CRIA, identifying the children and young people affected and summarising the evidence base for the assessment, including results from stakeholder consultation and participation and engagement work
- A list of the [UNCRC articles](#) relevant to the proposal
- Your assessment of the impact of the proposal on children's rights
- What you know about children and young people's views and experiences that are relevant to the proposal
- Outline of the monitoring and review process for the implementation of the strategy/policy or delivery of the service/programme, remembering to include children and young people in this process

5.2 CHILD RIGHTS IMPACT ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

STAGE 1

PURPOSE

Stage 1 sets out basic information on the strategy, policy, programme or service.

It is also where you consider who the strategy, policy, programme or service will affect, and whether the impact is likely to be direct or indirect.

For strategies or broad policy areas, you may want to list the overall aims as well as those which are specific to children and young people. Policies and programmes may have a direct and discernible impact on children which is made clear in their overall aims, but those that have an indirect impact may have been developed without children in mind.

In those cases, the CRIA process can be particularly beneficial by raising issues that otherwise would remain unexplored – by looking at what that policy or programme is trying to achieve through a ‘child rights lens’.

Under the UNCRC, ‘children’ can refer to individual children, groups of children, or children in general. Children can be ‘grouped’ by gender, ethnicity, faith, disability, sexuality, or age band; by geographical location or setting, for example children in rural areas, children in school, children in hospital; or those who often need a high level of state intervention, for example, children in care, children in conflict with the law, victims of abuse or exploitation, children subject to immigration control or children living in poverty.

Direct impact refers to policies/measures where children are directly affected by the proposed changes. Examples include: childcare, school breakfast clubs, child protection, looked after children or youth sports activities. **Indirect impact** refers to policies/measures that are not directly aimed at children but will have an impact on them. Examples include: local welfare support schemes, work preparation classes for parents, housing supply and design, policies on air quality or local transport schemes.



ASSESSING STRATEGIC AIMS: DRAFT STRATEGY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Stage 1 of the CRIA quoted the local authority's aim to ensure the delivery of early childhood services "that will provide working parents with high quality childcare, and give young children in the area the best start in life", whilst having to make cost-driven reductions in local early years provision.

Stage 2 of the CRIA referred to relevant articles of the [UNCRC](#), as well as implementation guidelines from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's [General Comment 7 on implementing child rights in early childhood](#), and recommendations made to the UK and devolved governments in the Committee's most recent set of [Concluding Observations](#).

From the General Comment:

"Under the UNCRC, **the right to early childhood education begins at birth, and is closely linked to a child's right to develop fully (Art.6.2). All young children and those with primary responsibility for their wellbeing should have access to services to promote their wellbeing, with particular attention paid to the most vulnerable groups** of young children and those at risk of discrimination (Art.2), as well as the young children of low-income parents/carers (Art.18.3). The State also has responsibilities to **take appropriate measures to enhance parents' understanding of their role in their children's early education, and encourage child-rearing practices which are child-centred (Art.18.2).**

"**Early years services should recognise the value of creative play (Art.31)** and

exploratory learning – providing the means by which young children are able to meet, play and interact in **child-centred, secure, supportive, stimulating and stress-free environments.**"

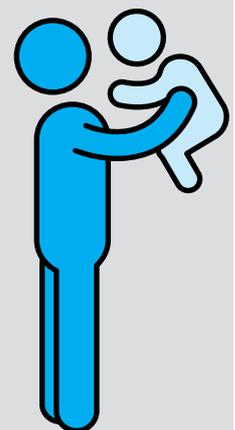
In the **2016 Concluding Observations**, in relation to young children's participation rights, and the right to the provision of early childhood development education and play services (Art.28, 29 & 31), the Committee recommended that:

"... **younger children should be supported to practise their Art.12 participation rights** (para.31(a)), including in the design of programmes and services.

"... **the state should allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources for the development and expansion of early childhood care and education**, based on a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood development, with special attention to the children in the most vulnerable situations' (para.73(f))."

These provided a framework against which the CRIA could interrogate the specific proposals outlined in the draft strategy and assess how well they fulfilled the local authority's overall aims.

It also provided criteria against which shortcomings in the stated aims could be identified: for example, the prioritisation of childcare for working parents and reductions in funding for other early childhood services.



INDIRECT IMPACT: CHILDREN'S VISIBILITY IN LOCAL HOUSING POLICY

Following discussion of a five-year refresh of its 20-year housing strategy, a local authority commissioned a CRIA in order to 'child-proof' the revised version.

The CRIA raised a number of issues regarding the relative invisibility of children in the original document which risked being replicated in the refreshed strategy:

- A lack of reliable demographic data on the number, age and ethnicity of children living in different household types, with information limited to 'known' numbers of homeless 16 to 18-year-olds, and disabled children requiring housing adaptations.
- A lack of evidence on children's views and experiences of housing and environmental issues, including housing precariousness, housing quality, energy efficiency, overcrowding, location, distance from school/college, access to public transport, neighbourhood safety, access to playgrounds, community and green spaces, and high-speed broadband connection.

- A failure to consult local children and young people on their views on future local development planning.

Each of these omissions made it difficult for the CRIA to evidence its assessment of the proposed priorities and actions.

The CRIA recommended that, in the short term, the council undertake a wide consultation exercise with children and young people, and their parents/carers to inform the refresh and, in the longer term, develop a research strategy including regular engagement with children to ensure the next full strategy would reflect their views and incorporate a more strategic response to their needs.

STAGE 2

BUILD AND ASSESS

Stage 2 is where you set out how the proposal relates to broad human rights principles and relevant articles of the UNCRC (see [Annex 1 for an overview of the seven principles of a child rights-based approach and the articles of the UNCRC](#)).

Every CRIA should appraise the strategy, policy, programme or service against the seven principles of a **child rights-based approach**: dignity; non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; participation; interdependence and indivisibility; and transparency and accountability.

Then each CRIA should set out all relevant individual rights under the **UNCRC** to give you the framework against which to assess whether or not the proposal will mean that the children affected will be able to access the full range of their rights.

Following that, you want to assess, firstly, whether the strategy, policy, programme or service is child rights compliant, and secondly, how it advances children's rights.

In order to help you assess this, you may find it helpful to refer to the interpretive guidance provided in relevant **General Comments** issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (see [Annex 2 for a complete list of the General Comments](#)).

The CRIA may reveal disparities in impact between different groups of children, or in relation to different measures, and these should be set out to ensure transparency in the decision-making process.

If the assessment indicates any negative impacts, you must include options for modification or mitigation of the proposals in order to ensure that anticipated impacts will be positive/neutral. If relevant, options should be costed and lead to clear recommendations for what should happen next.

THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF IMPACT

1 NEGATIVE

Where the proposal fails to comply with the UNCRC: May reverse the enjoyment of existing rights or may prove detrimental to particular groups of children.

2 POSITIVE

Where the proposal is compliant with UNCRC requirements: May make changes recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and/or has the potential to further progress the enjoyment of children's rights.

3 NEUTRAL

Where the proposal brings no lessening of or progress in children's rights.

IDENTIFYING A NEGATIVE IMPACT: EXTENDING THE USE OF STOP AND SEARCH POWERS

In partnership with coterminous local authorities, a police authority wanted to increase its use of stop and search powers in order to tackle rising levels of anti-social behaviour, mobile phone thefts, carrying weapons, and county line activity.

In addition to the seven principles of a child rights-based approach, it identified a number of UNCRC articles to be considered in the CRIA:

- **Article 15** – Freedom of association
- **Article 16** – Right to privacy
- **Article 19** – Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
- **Article 33** – Protection from drug abuse
- **Article 35** – Protection from abduction, sale and trafficking
- **Article 36** – Protection from other forms of exploitation
- **Article 37** – Protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment
- **Article 40** – Juvenile justice

The CRIA cited local quantitative data which showed that, under the existing policy, children between 12 and 18-years-old, and especially black and minority ethnic children, were disproportionately stopped and searched. However, evidence of their views on and experiences of being stopped and searched was limited, as was supporting evidence that it led to a reduction in crime.

When assessing the impact, the CRIA commented that any extension of the use of stop and search would have to balance the

rights of the young person with the need to promote public safety and prevent and detect crime.

In order to mitigate a negative impact, the CRIA recommended that local authorities and police develop a specific policy regarding the use of stop and search for children under 18.

That policy should cover children’s vulnerabilities and behaviours; the use of age-appropriate language; the need to safeguard any child found to be at risk of harm; and the need for the use of stop and search to be lawful, necessary, proportionate, non-discriminatory and rights-respecting.

It also recommended that the police issue a guide for children and young people on stop and search to explain why it was used, set out the young person’s rights under the new policy, and provide information about how to take forward associated complaints.



STAGE 3

VOICE AND EVIDENCE

Stage 3 is where you present the evidence for your assessment. The CRIA should summarise the evidence base for the strategy, policy, programme or service itself, and supplement it with child-specific research data which can be drawn from local needs analysis, demographic information, academic research, service monitoring/inspection reports, service evaluation reports, user surveys etc.

The evidence base should include a combination of quantitative and qualitative data that provides information on the numbers and groups of children who will be affected, and the views and experiences of children who will be affected as well as those of other stakeholders.

Undertaking a CRIA will make it clear whether it is possible to make well-informed decisions based on the existing evidence base, or whether there should be further participation and engagement work with the children who will be affected, or the commissioning of further research.

It is widely recognised that the meaningful involvement of children, as well as of agencies that advance their interests, is one of the most challenging aspects of the CRIA process. There are a range of potential sources: published research; inspection reports; children and young people's responses to a public consultation or targeted survey; or information from organisations working with and on behalf of children and young people.

Alternatively, if there is insufficient good quality, up-to-date evidence on how children and young people will be affected by the proposal, then the recommendation could be to commission new research or carry out additional participation and engagement work with the relevant groups before proceeding further.

It should be noted that establishing structures and mechanisms early on to regularly seek the input of children and young people can ensure that meaningful participation becomes embedded in the CRIA process rather than

an add on. Professionals should be trained in children's rights and meaningful participation and engagement so that they have the tools they need to place children and young people at the forefront of decision-making processes.

The CRIA should also set out how the strategy, policy, programme or service will be monitored, and at what point and by whom it will be reviewed. Building in a monitoring and review process can be vital to ensuring that the original aims are met whilst respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the children affected by those policies/services. The monitoring and review process itself adds to the evidence base for future CRIs.

If you want to use a CRIA as a tool to **evaluate an existing strategy, policy, programme or service** you can use the same template, follow the same process and ask the same questions. The difference is that you are looking at the actual impact: whether the existing strategy, policy, programme or service led to better outcomes for children and supported the delivery of children's rights, and whether you have access to sufficient reliable evidence to support your conclusions.

This CRIA should result in an evidence-based analysis that should include and be informed by the views and experiences of children and young people who were affected by the original proposal. It brings children and young people into the monitoring, review and evaluation process.

IDENTIFYING EVIDENCE GAPS: LOCAL COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

A local authority initiated a review of local complaints systems and mechanisms in order to introduce a streamlined, person-centred approach to a new complaints handling procedure.

The CRIA looked at research commissioned by the local authority which – with the exception of complaints relating to looked after children services, or services for children with special educational needs/ additional learning needs – contained no child-specific data. Even within these categories, it was not clear how many of the complaints had been made by children themselves, and how many by a parent/ carer or someone else on their behalf (including independent advocates).

In relation to complaints relating to a children's service, there were data gaps on the reasons for making a complaint, the experience of making a complaint, and the outcome of the complaint.

More broadly, there was no evidence available on the types of complaints children were likely to make, how child-friendly the systems were, or whether they were available on the platforms children were most likely to use.

Outside the looked after children system, there was no information on how confident staff felt in accepting, investigating and resolving a complaint from a child – particularly in relation to issues around consent and confidentiality.

INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: COUNCIL PROPOSAL TO CLOSE LOCAL LIBRARIES

As part of a package of local spending cuts, a council announced it would close 35% of its public library network, reduce opening hours in the remaining branches and introduce self-service branches with no staff on site. It also proposed barring children under 16 from using those self-service branches.

The CRIA found that the proposals were discriminatory (Article 2), failed to evidence consideration of the best interests of local children (Article 3) and could have a negative impact on their educational and social development (Article 6).

The proposals also risked undermining children's education rights (Articles 28 & 29) and their right to access information (Article 17).

The CRIA recommended that the council improve its decision-making processes by consulting with local children, their parents/carers, and teachers.

In response, the council delayed its decision; set up an online survey aimed at children and young people to explain what was being proposed and why; and asked

how they used the local library service, what their views were on the proposed cuts, and whether they had alternative suggestions that would help children continue to access local library services within a reduced budget.

It also contacted all local schools and colleges to ensure the survey was widely circulated and promoted.

This resulted in amendments to the original proposals: weekly late-night openings at each of the remaining library branches as well as weekends to facilitate out-of-school hours access, and reconsideration of age restrictions on the use of the self-service branches.

The council also agreed a programme of monitoring and review of the changes to the service which would involve children and young people along with other local residents.

GATHERING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS: SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE

An inner London borough decided to recommission their young people's substance misuse service. To inform this process they conducted a CRIA on the existing service to assess it from a child's rights-based perspective and to better understand the low take-up of the provision despite the high levels of need in the area.

As part of the CRIA process, young people who accessed the service and young people in the community more broadly were invited to take part in various child-centred consultations. Several young people who historically accessed the service were invited to take part in structured interviews and these interviews also became an optional part of case closure conversations.

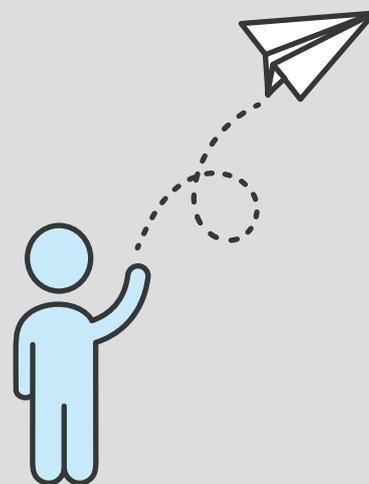
Young people accessing the service were invited to take part in a child-friendly survey which collated data on young people's views and experiences of the service as well as suggestions for improvement. Additionally, several focus groups were set up in child-friendly spaces such as youth centres and schools where young people could find out more about the service, share views and ask questions.

Findings from the youth consultations highlighted that there was a lack of awareness about the existence of the service and what it offered. There was also a sense of stigma attached to accessing the provision as it was clearly signposted as a service for young people struggling with substance misuse and was located near a cultural centre where young people may have encountered community members. The centre was also difficult to access by public transport.

Through a participative process young people were directly involved in redesigning the service, from deciding on a new name and logo, to informing the new service model which included an outreach provision so that young people could access support provision in safe and accessible locations around the community such as schools and libraries.

The new service model was based on child rights principles and informed by young people's feedback. Staff and young people accessing the service were taught about children's rights and clear and transparent mechanisms were put in place for young people to feed back, ask a question or make a complaint.

This participatory approach to recommissioning the substance misuse service transformed young people's engagement with the service and resulted in better, more holistic service provision for children and young people.



ANNEX 1: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

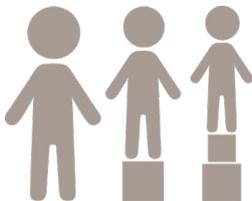
The seven principles of a child rights-based approach and the articles of the UNCRC provide the assessment framework for CRIAs.

A CHILD RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH: SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR PUTTING RIGHTS INTO PRACTICE WITHIN PUBLIC SERVICES



DIGNITY

Every child and young person, like each adult, has inner dignity and worth that should be valued, respected and nurtured. Respecting children's dignity means that all children should be treated with care and respect in all circumstances – in schools, hospitals, police stations, public spaces or children's homes.



NON-DISCRIMINATION (ARTICLE 2 UNCRC)

Every child and young person should be treated fairly and protected from discrimination, whatever their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, family background or any other status. Having access to equal opportunities and best possible outcomes doesn't mean being treated identically: some children and young people need more support than others to overcome barriers and difficulties.



BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD (ARTICLE 3 UNCRC)

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children and young people. Decisions can relate to individual children, for example about adoption, or groups of children and young people, for instance when designing play spaces. In all cases, children and young people should be involved in deciding what is best for them.



LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT (ARTICLE 6 UNCRC)

Every child has a right to life and each child and young person should enjoy the same opportunities to flourish as to be safe, healthy, grow and develop. From birth to adulthood, children and young people develop in many different ways – physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and educationally – and different professionals should work together to help make this happen.



PARTICIPATION - RESPECT FOR THE VIEWS OF THE CHILD (ARTICLE 12 UNCRC)

All children and young people have the right to have a say in matters that affect them and to have their views taken seriously. In order to participate meaningfully in the lives of their family, community and the wider society, children and young people need support and opportunities for involvement. They need information, a space to express their views and feelings and opportunities to ask questions.



INTERDEPENDENCE AND INDIVISIBILITY

All children and young people should enjoy all of their rights all of the time because all rights are equally important. Rights cannot be 'cherry-picked' depending on circumstances. Children and young people's rights to a good standard of living or to be protected from abuse, neglect and violence are as important as the right to get together with their peers or the right to freedom of expression.



TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Open dialogue and strong relationships between children and young people, professionals and local politicians are key to making rights a reality. For this to happen, everyone needs to be supported to learn about and understand rights. Knowledge of rights also allows children and young people to hold to account the people responsible for ensuring their rights are protected and realised.

ARTICLES OF THE UNCRC

DEFINITION OF THE CHILD



1 Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

The articles of the UNCRC are often grouped into clusters of rights which share a common theme. This can help you navigate your way through the UNCRC and identify the rights that are most relevant to the subject of your CRIA. Once identified, however, it is important to refer to the **full text of the UNCRC** and its **Optional Protocols**.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS



7 Every child has the right to be registered at birth, to have a name and nationality, and, as far as possible, to know and be cared for by their parents.



8 Governments must respect and protect children's right to an identity, and prevent the child's name, nationality or family relationships from being changed unlawfully.



13 Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.



14 Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.



15 Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.



16 Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life, including protecting children from unlawful attacks that harm their reputation.



17 Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



19 Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.



28 Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights.



34 Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.



37 No child should be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.



39 Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE



5 Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up, so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child's increasing capacity to make their own choices.



9 Children must not be separated from their parents against their will unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting or neglecting a child).
Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents unless this could cause them harm.



10 Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit and keep in contact with both of them.



11 Governments must do everything they can to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally by their parents or other relatives, or being prevented from returning home.



18 Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.

ANNEX 1: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



If a child cannot be looked after by their immediate family, the government must give them special protection and assistance. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion.



Governments must oversee the process of adoption to make sure it is safe, lawful and that it prioritises children's best interests. Children should only be adopted outside of their country if they cannot be placed with a family in their own country.



If a child has been placed away from home for the purpose of care or protection (for example, with a foster family or in hospital), they have the right to a regular review of their treatment, the way they are cared for and their wider circumstances.



Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments should take all appropriate measures to recover child maintenance from parents or others who have financial responsibility for the child.

DISABILITY, BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE



Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.



Governments must take all appropriate measures to ensure the children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services and facilities.



A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to support disabled children and their families.



Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy.



Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance.

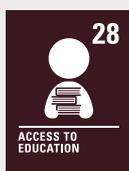


27 Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this, and in particular provide assistance and support with food, clothing and housing.



33 Governments must protect children from the illegal use of drugs and from being involved in the production or distribution of drugs.

EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES



28 Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child.



29 Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.



30 Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.



31 Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES



22 If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention. Governments must help refugee children who are separated from their parents to be reunited with them.



30 Children from minority or indigenous groups have the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.



32 Governments must protect children from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development or education. Governments must set a minimum age for children to work and ensure that work conditions are safe and appropriate.

ANNEX 1: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



Governments must protect children from the illegal use of drugs and from being involved in the production or distribution of drugs.



Governments must protect children from being abducted, sold or moved illegally to a different place in or outside their country for the purpose of exploitation.



Governments must protect children from all other forms of exploitation, for example the exploitation of children for political activities, by the media or for medical research.



No child should be deprived of their liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. Children should be arrested, detained or imprisoned only as a last resort and for the shortest time possible. They must be treated with respect and care, and be able to keep in contact with their family. Children must not be put in prison with adults.



Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces. Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war and armed conflicts.



Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.



Children accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment. There should be lots of solutions to help these children become good members of their communities. Prison should only be the last choice.

OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE UNCRC ON THE SALE OF CHILDREN, CHILD PROSTITUTION AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Governments must prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and recognise the vulnerability of child victims, protect their privacy, provide appropriate support services and ensure their safety.

ANNEX 2: GENERAL COMMENTS OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child provides guidance on the interpretation of the articles of the UNCRC through the publication of General Comments, which appear at irregular intervals. The CFC team can advise on any titles in preparation.

- 1 [The aims of education \(2001\)](#)
- 2 [The role of independent National Human Rights Institutions in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child \(2002\)](#)
- 3 [HIV/AIDS and the rights of children \(2003\)](#)
- 4 [Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child \(2003\)](#)
- 5 [General measures of implementation on the Convention on the Rights of the Child \(2003\)](#)
- 6 [Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin \(2005\)](#)
- 7 [Implementing child rights in early childhood \(2005\)](#)
- 8 [The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment \(2006\)](#)
- 9 [The rights of children with disabilities \(2006\)](#)
- 10 [Children's rights in juvenile justice \(2007\)](#)
- 11 [Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention \(2009\)](#)
- 12 [The right of the child to be heard \(2009\)](#)
- 13 [The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence \(2011\)](#)
- 14 [On the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration \(2013\)](#)
- 15 [On the right of the child to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health \(2013\)](#)
- 16 [State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights \(2013\)](#)
- 17 [On the right of the child to rest, leisure, plan, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts \(2013\)](#)
- 18 [On harmful practices \(Joint General Comment with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women\) \(2014\)](#)

- 19** [Public budgeting for the realisation of children’s rights \(2016\)](#)
- 20** [Implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence \(2016\)](#)
- 21** [Children in street situations \(2017\)](#)
- 22** [General principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration \(Joint General Comment with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families\) \(2017\)](#)
- 23** [State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return \(Joint General Comment with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families\) \(2017\)](#)
- 24** [Children’s rights in the child justice system \(2019\)](#)
- 25** [Children’s rights in relation to the digital environment \(2021\)](#)



**CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES
& COMMUNITIES IS A UK
COMMITTEE FOR UNICEF
(UNICEF UK) PROGRAMME THAT
WORKS WITH COUNCILS TO
PUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS INTO
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