



# Service Design

## Involving younger care experienced children

“

I think it is important that adults listen to us. I believe they have good intentions to change things for children in care. I know they try but I am not always sure if they succeed.

”

Resource: **1**

A series of three resources for leaders, managers and senior practitioners

 **Children's Parliament**

In partnership with:

 **The Promise Scotland**  
SUPPORTING CHANGE FOR CHILDREN,  
FAMILIES & CARE EXPERIENCED ADULTS

**Children’s Parliament**, in partnership with **The Promise Scotland**, has created this series to highlight a children’s human rights approach to involving younger **care experienced children**, aged 9 to 14, in service design.

### Resource one:

Why a children’s human rights approach is essential to keeping the promise and should underpin service design. This resource provides an overview of relevant legislation, policy and essential skills and knowledge.

### Resource two:

How to put children’s human rights into practice by involving children in service design. This resource focuses on the principles of rights and planning for involving younger care experienced children.

### Resource three:

What younger care experienced children’s participation in service design looks and feels like in practice. This resource includes practical examples, tools and tips.

These resources will be useful to those with responsibility for designing and implementing service design programmes with and for care experienced children, including senior leadership teams and senior practitioners in government, local authorities, public bodies and third sector organisations.

These resources are rooted in Children’s Parliament’s work with care experienced children aged 9 to 14 and are primarily aimed at this age group. The principles and knowledge can also be applied when planning your work with care experienced children who are younger, although attention should be given to ensuring methods are age and stage appropriate.

For more information about our work with **The Promise Scotland** and to access all of the resources online, scan the QR or visit: [www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/the-promise/](http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/our-work/the-promise/)



## Why a children's human rights approach is essential to keeping the promise and should underpin service design.

The **Independent Care Review** heard that Scotland needs to change how it cares for children. Scotland has made a promise that children will grow up **loved, safe and respected** and yet, as we know, the Care Review found that this does not always happen.

From 2017 to 2020, the Care Review travelled across Scotland to listen to infants, children and young people in care, and care experienced adults. Over 5,500 people told the Care Review their stories, with more than half having experience of the 'care system', alongside members of the paid and unpaid workforce.

Children's Parliament participated in the Care Review, working with younger children with care experience on a creative, human rights-based project exploring what it means to be healthy, happy and safe in care: **'I am more than being in care': a consultation with children with care experience to inform the Independent Care Review (2020)**.



## The Five Foundations



The Promise report is built on Five Foundations and these foundations must be at the heart of a reorganisation of how Scotland thinks, plans and prioritises for children and their families following the Care Review.

### **Voice**

Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focused on children and those they trust.

### **Family**

Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay - and families must be given support together, to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.

### **Care**

Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters wherever safe to do so, and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.

### **People**

The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.

### **Scaffolding**

Help and support must be there for children and families whenever they need it. It must also be there for the adults who are close to children and families. It is important everyone knows where to go for help and that it is ready when it is asked for.

**“ It is important that children with care experience think they are loved. Even if they are cared for - they all have the right to be loved. ”**

Member of Children's Parliament

Details and narratives of each of these foundations can be found in the Independent Care Review reports and infographics. We suggest using the Pinky Promise report for younger readers to support participation.

The five foundations provide a basis for exploring the extent to which Scotland is keeping its promise to children and involving care experienced children in service design.



## A children's human rights approach

Everyone has rights as members of the human family. The Charter of the United Nations recognises human rights as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Human rights belong to everyone equally.

Human rights are laid down in international human rights 'instruments' (agreements between nations) such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, amongst others. A special focus is given to children's human rights in recognition of the particular needs and entitlements we have during childhood. This focus on children's human rights is laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and is why we use the phrase 'children's human rights'. The **Wee Book of Promises** is a child-friendly version of the UNCRC.

A children's human rights approach is about working holistically to implement children's rights as set out in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, taking account of the five principles:

- **Embedding** children's rights – putting children's rights at the core of planning and service delivery.
- **Equality and non-discrimination** - ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to be the best they can be.
- **Empowering** children – enhancing children's capabilities as individuals so they are better able to claim their rights and engage with and hold accountable the institutions and individuals that affect their lives.
- **Participation** – listening to children and taking their views meaningfully into account.
- **Accountability** – authorities should be accountable to children for decisions and actions that affect their lives.

**“ I’ve learnt that some adults in this world take an interest in what we have to say and make a change, adults like that who can take time, listen to what we have to say, and really make an effort to make things happen. Some have come back and told us about the efforts they have made. ”**

Member of Children’s Parliament



A children's human rights approach is about working holistically to implement children's rights as set out in the UNCRC. Respect for **human dignity** is at the heart of every human rights instrument. A children's human rights approach in practice:

- builds the capacity of children and young people as rights-holders to claim their rights
- supports children and young people to defend their own rights and those of others
- builds the capacity of workers to fulfil their obligations to children and young people
- recognises that relationships based on human rights values are necessary for realising children's rights
- includes children and young people's knowledge of what it is like to be a child or young person, and their ideas and opinions
- establishes the environment and support that enables children and young people to advocate effectively for themselves
- enables adults to benefit from the rich learning intrinsic to these approaches.

A children's human rights approach is not only relevant to services for children and young people. All decisions made about, and actions taken to deliver public services may impact on the rights and wellbeing of children. It is vital to the realisation of children's rights for all those carrying out public functions to consider children's human rights in their work.

Involving younger care experienced children in reviewing, reflecting on and engaging with the services that impact their daily lives, and that of others, is a way to make positive change - if we understand the perspectives of the children who use services, we can make services better.



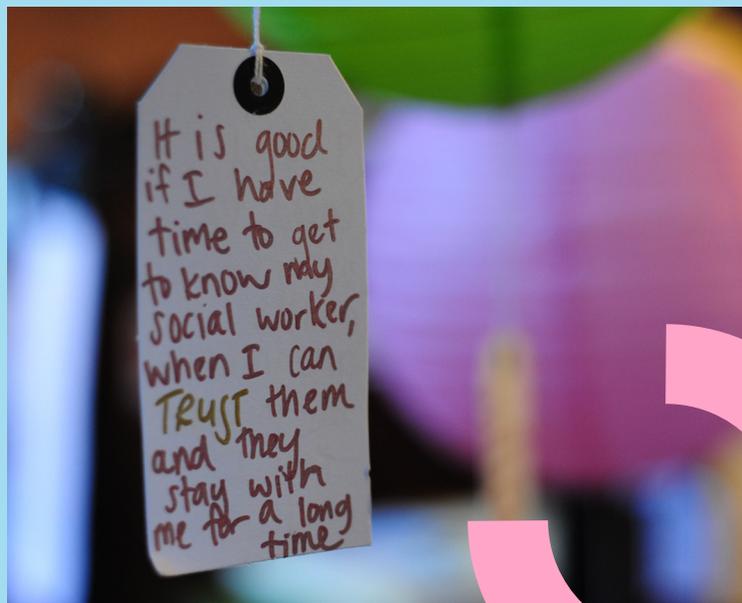
The **What Matters** questions are based on what children and families told the Independent Care Review was important to them.

All children have a right to be heard and to express their views freely in all matters affecting them under article 12 of the UNCRC. This includes younger children, giving sufficient time and creative, fun, participatory and relationship-based methods appropriate to their age.

“ People whose job it is to make big decisions that will affect me and my family’s life, care most about what matters to me and my family. ”

The promise story of progress: What matters questions: Plan 24-30

It is **not up to children to come up with solutions to problems in the “care system”** - but it is adults’ responsibility to listen to their views, experiences and ideas.

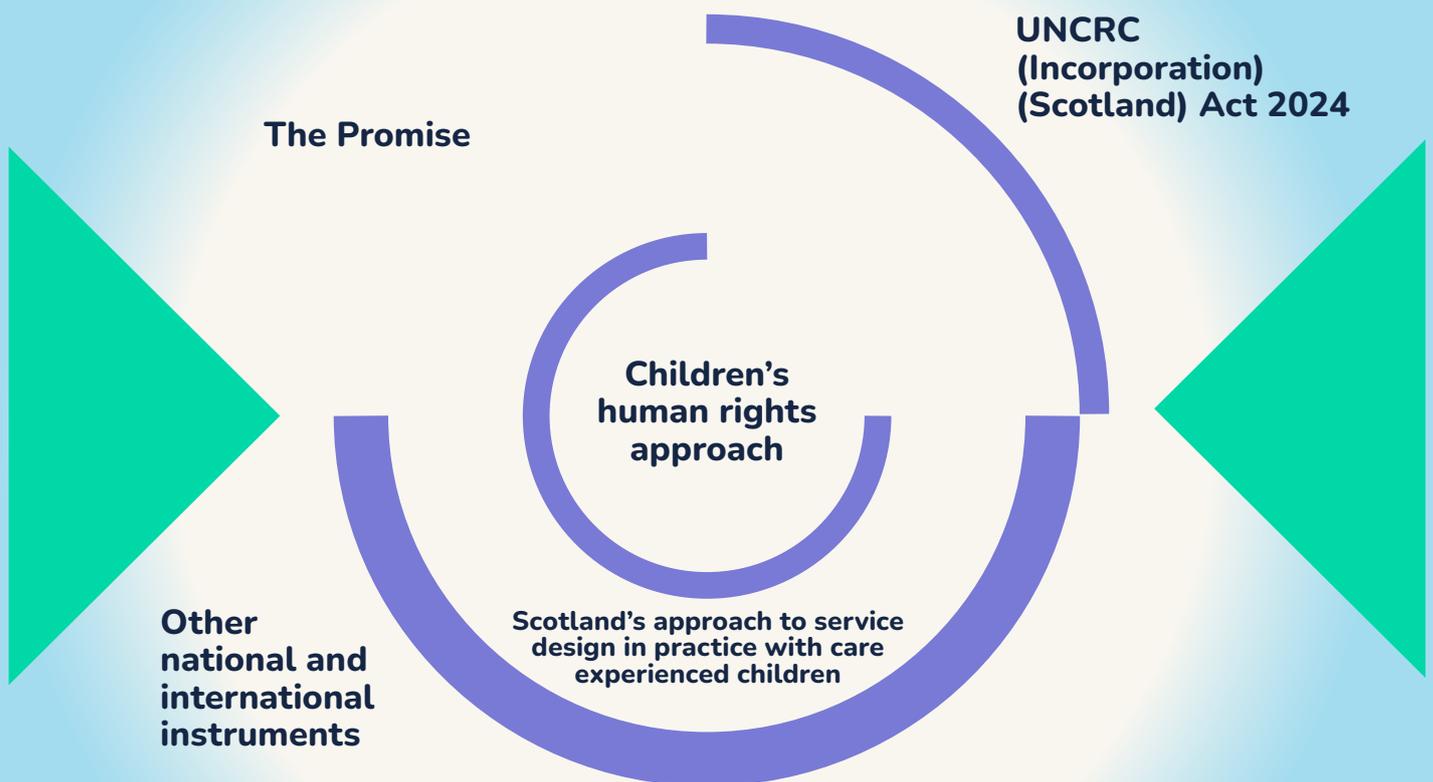


Visit the tool at:

[plan2430.scot/the-promise-story-of-progress/what-matters-questions/](https://plan2430.scot/the-promise-story-of-progress/what-matters-questions/)

## Designing and providing services underpinned by children's human rights

For public bodies, involving younger children is a concrete action demonstrating what work is underway and is planned, when reporting on progress on children's human rights. First reports are due under the requirements of the **UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024** as soon as practicable after 31st March 2026, and thereafter, every three years. More information is available in '**Understanding children's human rights: a guide for the public sector**' published by the Improvement Service with resources from Children's Parliament, Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland (CYPCS), Scottish Youth Parliament, Education Scotland and Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights).



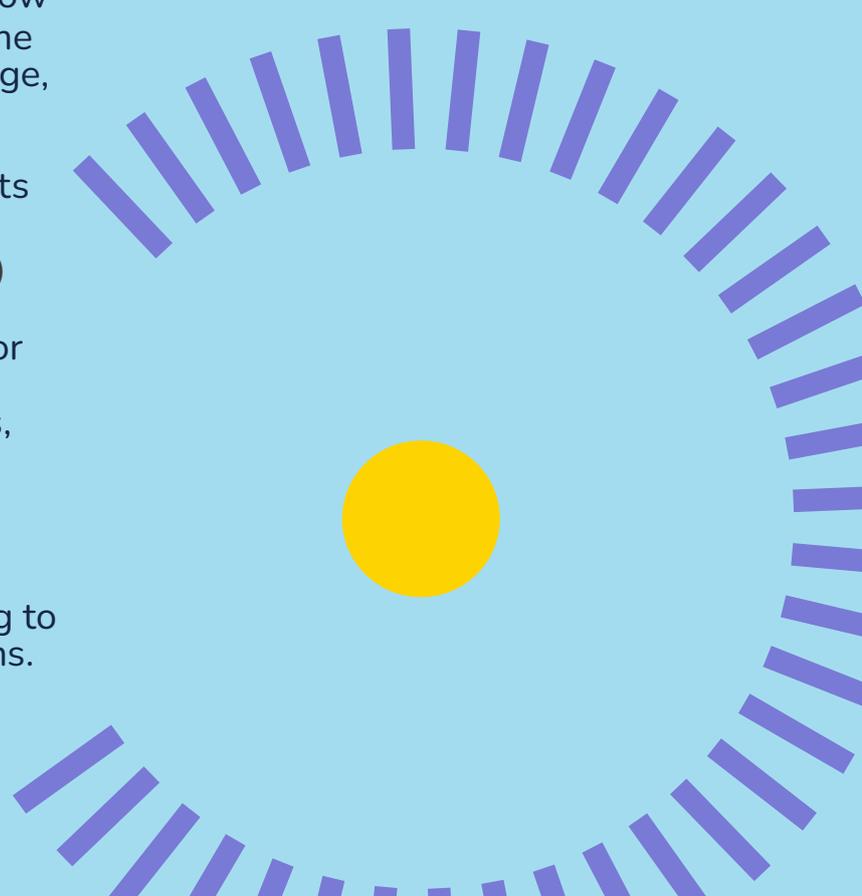
“As significant local employers and providers of key services, the reach of public bodies to advance and protect children's rights is extensive.”

Understanding Children's Human Rights, Improvement Service, 2024

Children and young people in Scotland are now able to hold to account duty bearers defined in the 2024 Act. These are public authorities, such as local authorities and health boards. Public bodies need to act in a manner that is compatible with the UNCRC when delivering devolved functions conferred by or under Acts of the Scottish Parliament or under common law powers. There is a legal obligation to protect children's human rights and, to take action, where there is a violation of children's rights.

Involving younger care experienced children in service design is a proactive step to ensure the **protection of their rights**. It is a route to reducing the gap between rights articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and children's everyday experiences. It is also useful to incorporate the s to help them actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions. **Fairer Scotland Duty** to help them actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

Implementing a children's human rights approach aligns with the **Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAtSD)** providing an opportunity to redesign services to make things work better for everyone. Too often, younger children have not been involved in this process, despite many services being provided to, and for, children and families. The **Improvement Service** describes the emphasis on collaboration to design services through a citizen lens, leading to more innovative and effective solutions.



## Essential skills and knowledge

All adults need to have a good understanding of the rights that care experienced children have under the UNCRC and make sure everyday decisions are underpinned by these rights. The **Children's Rights Skills and Knowledge Framework** is designed to enable staff to build or reflect on their children's rights knowledge and take a children's human rights approach to their practice.

“ Children should be involved in making decisions. They should be able to make choices in their day-to-day lives in a way that allows them to feel they have some control over what happens to them and should be included in conversations about things that affect them. ”

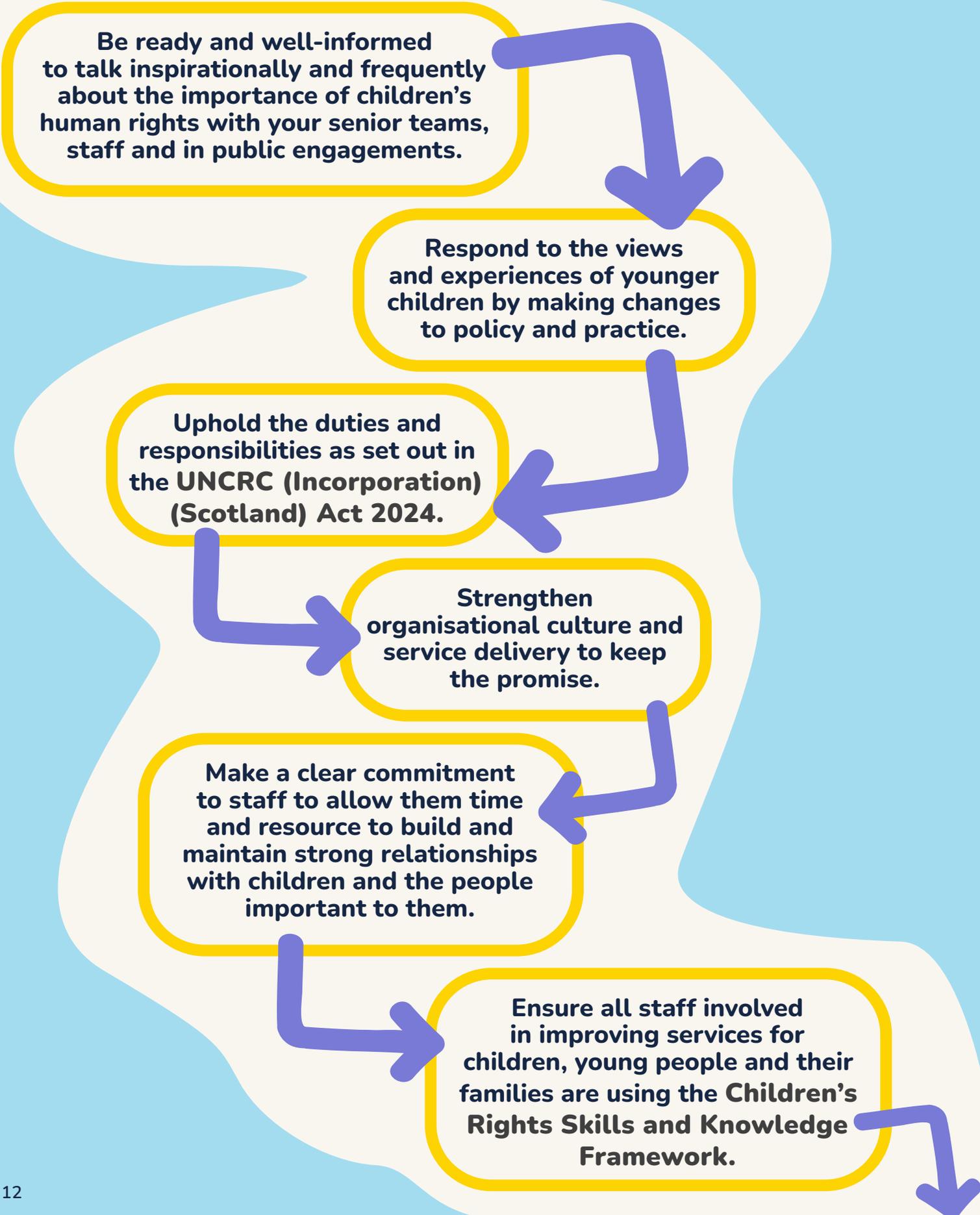
Member of Children's Parliament

Leaders should be inspiring champions of children's human rights. Involving children in the design of services is a clear way to ensure their rights are upheld.

Further steps, to making this happen in practice are detailed in Resources two and three.



**Actions to lead**



Make a clear commitment to involving younger care experienced children in service design, recognising that they need age-appropriate methods.

**Implement Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA)** examining the potential impacts on children and young people of laws, policies, budget decisions, programmes and services as they are being developed. Carried out prior to the decision or action being set in place, **guidance is available on involving children.**

Ensure your Corporate and Strategic level plans make an explicit commitment to children's human rights, including in your plans for involving children in **Child Rights Impact Assessments and Evaluations.**

Ensure your commitment to involving younger children in service design is embedded in service level priorities, **budgeting and planning** and in your children's rights action plan.

Ensure procurement and commissioning processes ensure that children's human rights are considered when awarding contracts to those who provide services on your behalf.



## About Children's Parliament

Established in 1996, **Children's Parliament** is dedicated to the realisation of children's human rights in Scotland. Our dream is that children grow up in a world of love, happiness and understanding. We provide children up to 14 years of age with opportunities to share their views, experience and ideas so that they can influence positive change locally and nationally.

## About The Promise Scotland

**The Promise Scotland** is helping Scotland keep its promise to care experienced people across Scotland through leading projects to drive change and supporting organisations to make the changes they need to keep the promise. This is delivered through the **Plan 24-30** to set out what must change and associated route maps.

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks to Theresa Casey for developing this resource in collaboration with Children's Parliament.