

Disabled children and young people thematic review

Briefing May 2023

Introduction

The vision for all children and young people in Scotland is that they grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding¹. Their life chances are enhanced through early years provision and by supporting families when they need it. This aligns with The Promise that Scotland’s children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected.

Using a rights-based approach, we will explore how well local authorities are applying GIRFEC principles to ensure that disabled children have their needs met and their rights promoted and protected. We will do this by developing a thematic review that starts from the lens of children’s rights and what matters to disabled children. Core to our approach the UNCRC and UNCRPD and the principle of disabled children and young people fully enjoying their rights on an equal basis with non-disabled children and young people. We recognise and are committed to upholding all human rights and for the purposes of this review will be explicitly focusing on the following:



¹ [Children and Young People | National Performance Framework](#)

This brief provides an overarching summary of the national context which has informed our thinking. Throughout this document we use the term ‘children’ to refer to babies, infants, children and young people up to age 18. Within our review we will focus on the experiences of children who are considered disabled under article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)²:

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long term physical, mental intellectual or sensory impairments which any interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”

Current context and rationale

The policy and legislative context which impacts on the lives of disabled children and young people is varied and complex. Research and reviews indicate that there are aspects of good practice and there are also areas where the experiences of disabled children and young people are variable.

We are building our approach on children’s voice already gathered through contemporary research and policy, using experiences of what good practice feels and looks like and what children have told us matters to them.

The review is an opportunity to influence and contribute to the national realisation of foundations stated in Promise Change Programme One (2021/2024) to enable every child in Scotland to have the right to ‘a good childhood’. The review methodology will be designed around two of the ‘fundamentals’ named: ‘What matters to children and families’ and ‘Children’s rights’.

The landscape across Scotland within which services for disabled children and their families are delivered has changed as a result of the Covid pandemic. It continues to change with the more recent cost of living constraints. It is therefore essential that the thematic review considers the wider picture across the whole of the country. It presents an opportunity to highlight good practice, recognise the challenges being faced across the country and identify areas where action is needed to improve outcomes for disabled children and their families.

Aim of the review and quality framework

We will provide a national overview of social work’s contribution to how well disabled children and young people’s needs are assessed, planned for, and met. This will include hearing from children about the things that are important to them, their experiences of participation and of receiving care and support. We have structured our review under the following two high level statements:

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

- Children and young people are actively heard, informed, and meaningfully involved in decisions about their lives.
- Children's and young people's wellbeing has been promoted through high quality child centred planning and bespoke support.

Our ³[quality framework](#) is a core component of our methodology. Our approach is underpinned by the quality indicators of key processes and impact.

Children's voice and stakeholder engagement

The Promise highlights the need for particular effort to be made to effectively listen to the voices of disabled children and central to our review is the assumption of inclusive communication methods to effectively enable and listen to the voices of disabled children.

To ensure we fulfil our commitment to upholding children's rights we have developed a flexible approach with stakeholders. We are engaging with organisations who work directly with those children on whose behalf we are conducting this review. We are keen this review benefits from their knowledge and experience. Throughout the development phase we will consult with a range of professional stakeholders on our tools and aspects on our methodology. This will allow for those directly involved in the provision of services to shape our approach.

Approach and methodology

Our approach is centred on what children tell us is important to them. The review activity will take place over three phases.

Phase 1

Our review team will develop our understanding of what matters to children through analysis of national intelligence on children's voice.

All local authority areas will be supported to complete a questionnaire on social work's contribution to the wellbeing of disabled children and young people.

Phase 2

Child/parent and staff survey and review of records in four local authority areas.

Phase 3

Engagement in four local authority areas including conversations with children and young people and their network of support.

Publication of one overview report.

³ [Quality framework for children and young people in need of care and protection NOV 2022.pdf \(careinspectorate.com\)](#)