

## **Background**

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on a range of public authorities to report, 'as soon as practicable' after the end of each three-year period, the steps they have taken to secure better or further effect the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)<sup>1</sup>.

The first three-year reporting period prescribed by legislation pertains to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. This period was extended due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, with public authorities entitled to delay reporting for this period until September 2022.

Using the UNCRC framework, this report details provides examples of the activity we have delivered over the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 to support Renfrewshire's children and young people further their rights. This report is not intended to be exhaustive, rather it provides key highlights, achievements and successes that provide a strong foundation upon which to build.

## **Renfrewshire Council**

Renfrewshire Council provides a diverse range of services to local people, businesses and communities, with a net budget of approximately £380m, and over 7900 employees.

The Council has a vital role in shaping the places which people live and work in, driving the local economy, providing education and learning, supporting and caring for vulnerable people and facilitating local democracy.

Partnership is key to what we do in Renfrewshire. From driving economic and cultural regeneration to providing housing and education, the Council works with a range of partners across the business, public, third and community sectors to improve outcomes. Our Community Planning Partnership is a strong example of how our local stakeholders work together to make Renfrewshire a fairer, more inclusive place where all our people, communities and businesses thrive. Our partnership focuses on early intervention and prevention, and by sharing insight and best practice we ensure that we get the best use of the resources we have to improve outcomes for local people. Our Children's Services Partnership supplements this approach by providing additional oversight, support and direction to ensure our collective provision is constantly aligned to the needs and demands of our communities, with the rights and voices of children and young people taking a central role.

## **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The UNCRC sets out the human rights of every person under the age of 18 and is the most complete statement on children's rights treaty in history. It was adopted by the UN

General Assembly in 1989 and is the most widely adopted international human rights treaty in history. Progress on implementation of the UNCRC is monitored by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It makes clear how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

The rights contained in the 54 articles of the UNCRC are:

- **Universal**, everyone under 18 has the human rights contained in the UNCRC
- **Inalienable**, human rights can't be taken away, including those in the UNCRC
- **Indivisible**, rights in the UNCRC can't be separated from each other or placed in an order that suggests one is more important than the other
- **Interdependent**, the rights in the UNCRC depend on each other<sup>1</sup>

## The UNCRC in Scotland

The Scottish Government is committed to making Scotland the best place for children and young people to grow up. Scotland's children should be respected, protected, enabled and fulfilled across public services. Children's rights must be a primary consideration when decisions are taken at an individual, local or national level.

The UNCRC came into force across the UK in 1992 following ratification in 1991. The UK Government has primary responsibilities for the preparation and submission of monitoring reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, with the Scottish Parliament having the competence to "observe and implement" international obligations, so far as they fall within existing devolved competence.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on public authorities to report on the steps they have taken to secure better or further effect the UNCRC requirements. Associated guidance encourages public authorities to adopt an assessment framework that aligns with that recommended for reports to the UN Committee on the Rights for the Child, which identifies eight clusters of rights and protocols under the following general themes:

- general measures of implementation

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cypcs.org.uk>

- general principles of the UNCRC
- civil rights and freedoms
- violence against children
- family environment and alternative care
- basic health and welfare
- education, leisure, and culture
- special protection measures

### **Getting in Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)**

GIRFEC is a national approach which identified a framework for improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people. Services should be accessible to the right people at the right time to ensure all children and young people are safe, healthy achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (SHANARRI)<sup>2</sup>.

In Renfrewshire, we are committed to supporting GIRFEC and work to embed this framework in all that we do when working with children, young people and their families.

### **Achievements: 2017 – 2020**

Renfrewshire Council has delivered a broad range of activity to improve children's rights over the period 2017 – 2020. Key examples are included in Appendix 1 in this report.

We have learned a lot from our efforts to tackle poverty and have made great strides in equipping families with information and advice to help them access financial support. We have removed barriers for families to enable their children to access and fully participate in education, as well as other social, leisure and educational opportunities provided by us and our partners. We have learned a lot by listening to our children and young people, providing them the chance to influence our decision making and direct resource to areas that are important to them, including the way we deliver our support around mental health and wellbeing. Such opportunities are especially important for children and young people in care, and we have adapted our practice to ensure their needs and aspirations take a central role in decision making,

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guidance-part-1-section-2-duties-public-authorities-relation-uncrc/pages/6/>

We are proud of our successes and will continue to critically reflect on this work when adapting our approach to further effect the UNCRC in Renfrewshire over the coming years.

## **Looking Ahead**

The rights and wellbeing of children and young people is intrinsic to what we do. We will continue to deliver on our statutory duty to promote equality and work with partners to raise awareness of the UNCRC and ensure children and young people's rights are promoted and reflected in policy, strategy and service delivery. The Council supports efforts to incorporate the UNCRC to the maximum extent possible and will embed any requirements associated with this. The activity referenced in this report provides examples of how we help our children and young people realise or further their rights in alignment with the UNCRC, and how this approach is fundamental to the work we undertake. We are proud of our achievements in helping children, young people and broader communities achieve improved outcomes.

Our communities have faced several challenges in recent years and the impact of ongoing social and economic pressures are likely to influence our approach to service delivery for some time to come. With the support of our partners, we will seek to address many of these challenges through our revised Community Plan and Council Plan by equipping our communities with the support, resources and assets they need to achieve improved outcomes.

We will draw heavily on previous learning and ongoing performance review to ensure we are able to assess, adapt and respond to emerging priorities. Central to this will be reflecting on the work delivered in relation to our children and young people and ensuring the specific challenges they face are aligned to the opportunities afforded via ourselves and our dedicated local partners. This will enable us to deliver on the priorities identified by our Children's Services Partnership:

- **We will ensure our children and young people enjoy good physical and mental health**, by bridging the gap between universal and more specialist services and providing accessible, whole family support at times of need.
- **We will ensure our children and young people are safe and loved**, and support those who's families are impacted by issues such as alcohol, drugs and harmful behaviour that presents a risk.
- **We want children and young people's rights to be protected and their voices heard in society**, particularly those children and young people in care whose needs are at the centre of decision making.
- **We want our children and young people to be supported to achieve, thrive and make positive contributions to their communities**, and by working with partners

we will provide support to help young people move on to positive destinations, and access social, leisure and cultural opportunities that help them grow and develop healthily.

We will monitor progress against key milestones and take an outcome-focussed approach to evaluating impact, drawing on the voices of our children and young people at every opportunity.

Cluster	Description	Meaning	Example
1	General Measures of Implementation	This cluster focuses on what Renfrewshire Council is expected to do to implement the UNCRC through law, policy and decisions which impact on children. IT applies to legal and non-legal measures.	<p>Renfrewshire Council has a skilled and competent workforce committed to upholding children's rights, supporting Article 4 of the UNCRC.</p> <p>In 2019, we started a conversation with staff and communities to develop the values that support the kind of organisation we wanted Renfrewshire Council to be. We aimed to develop core values that shape and reflect how we work together, how local people view us, and how we act and support each other.</p> <p>We undertook an extensive consultation and engagement exercise, conducting staff workshops, a community survey focus sessions involving young people and our Third Sector partners. We analysed the results and identified four core values that have since been formally adopted and embedded into our People Strategy: we are fair, we are helpful, we are great collators, and we value learning.</p> <p>Our values and associated resources actively shape our relationships with our communities. When developing and delivering services, we are committed to being empathetic and non-judgemental to all, upholding the dignity of those experiencing challenging circumstances and supporting each other's wellbeing. This applies to all who live, work or visit Renfrewshire, including our children and young people.</p>

2	General principles of the UNCRC	<p>This cluster focuses on the four general principles of the UNCRC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• non-discrimination (Article 2): children should not be discriminated against;</li> <li>• best interests of the child (Article 3): every decision and action must be in a child's best interests;</li> <li>• survival and development (Article 6): every child has the right to life and to develop to their full potential, and</li> <li>• respect for the views of the child (Article 12)</li> </ul>	<p>In Renfrewshire, we use a range of measures to seek children and young people's views about matters that affect them. We always consider these views in determining what's in children's best interests, in accordance with Articles 3 and 12 of the UNCRC.</p> <p>2018 was the Scottish Year of Young People (YoYP) and provided the perfect opportunity for Renfrewshire's talented and motivated young people to demonstrate their ability to work with community planning partners to shape the services that impact them. Throughout the year, local YoYP Ambassadors worked with local stakeholders and elected members to promote young people's issues, principally through a successful events and activities programme. The flagship example was the 2018 Halloween Festival, which was the culmination of the efforts of over 700 local young people who helped influence, design and deliver the event. These efforts were celebrated at the YoYP Positive About Youth Awards, which acknowledged the outstanding contribution of our young people to their peers and communities.</p> <p>The YoYP has had a lasting impact on how we embrace the views and utilise the skills of our young people, with partners concentrating efforts to ensure young people have access to opportunities and forums to shape local services. One of the key forums for young people to do this is through Renfrewshire Youth Voice (RYV), a local charity supported by Renfrewshire's Youth Services. RYV encourage young people in Renfrewshire to participate in youth empowerment and seek opportunities to strengthen emerging policies, programmes and initiatives with a young person's narrative. Notable successes of this group include it's work to co-</p>
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			<p>develop a participatory budgeting model with Renfrewshire Council, which ultimately led to the creation of the £150,0000 Celebrating Renfrewshire Fund, which will resource projects which have a positive impact on the lives on Renfrewshire's young people</p>
3	Civil rights and freedoms	<p>Promoting children's civil rights and freedoms, including the right to move freely in public space and meet with others to think and believe what they like, to access information and speak their mind as long as it is not harmful to others, to keep certain matter private and to be protected from inhumane or degrading treatment</p>	<p>In October 2018 the Council established a Greenspaces, Parks &amp; Play Areas and Villages Investment Fund. The fund provided financial support to community groups who wished to develop and deliver improvement projects in their local areas, focusing on parks, recreation areas, and assets that contributed to each village's social and cultural identify.</p> <p>Community groups were required to undertake extensive consultation and engagement to effectively evidence local need. Funding was disbursed to projects that presented a strong case for infrastructure improvements that improve access to and appreciation of public space.</p> <p>The needs and aspirations of children and young people were very well represented, with many of the projects addressing issues around inability to access inclusive opportunities for leisure and play. Deliverables from funded projects included the introduction of modern, accessible play equipment, outdoor gyms, increased seating provision at community parks, and the purchase of gardening equipment specifically for use by children and young people to enable them to shape and nurture their local greenspaces.</p>



			<p>This work evidences a grass root, community-driven approach to placeshaping, with children and young people’s voices being the significant driver. Developing community assets to reflect the needs and requirements of these groups evidences our work towards facilitating freedom of expression, in accordance with UNCRC Article 13.</p>
4	Violence against children	<p>Address situations where children experience violence, including physical and mental abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation.</p> <p>Identifies that children have the right to services that support physical and psychological recovery.</p>	<p>In Renfrewshire we work hard to challenge the attitudes which underpin gender-based violence (GBV) across our communities. We have developed approaches to address and manage this behaviour in schools and other settings across our communities, in accordance with UNCRC Article 28 (2).</p> <p>In schools, notable activity to raise awareness of GBV and its impact is facilitated by Renfrewshire’s Health and Wellbeing Development Officer. The Officer is responsible for the Mentors in Violence Prevention programme (MVP), which by March 2020 was operating in several schools, resulting in almost 300 pupils being trained as mentors in recognising disrespectful and abusive language and behaviour and developing skills in leadership and facilitation. Through peer mentoring, younger students consider and discuss different scenarios such as behaviour online, the use of harmful language, coercive control, gender labelling and alcohol and consent. This challenges the attitudes of young audiences and encourages them to consider the impact of such behaviour in our communities.</p> <p>Our Big Lottery-funded Early Action System Change (EASC) project is working directly with local young people to prevent coercive control in relationships. The project, a partnership between health, social work and</p>

			the local third sector, has co-produced innovative approaches to promoting healthy, positive relationships.
5	Family environment and alternative care	Children have the right to not be separated from their parents unless in their best interests. Children who live apart from their parents have the right to be well cared for, and maintain contact with their parents if this is in their best interests. Children have a right to have their voice heard when decision are made about where they should live, and all placements should protect against violence and abuse.	<p>The voice of children and young people must be heard and reflected in all aspects of the Renfrewshire Council's children's social work service. We will always take time to explain to children and young people, in ways appropriate to their age and developmental stage, why social work is involved in their life and why certain decisions are being made. We will proactively seek children and young people's views and meaningfully involve them in decision making about their care. Where we are unable to accede to their requests, we will explain the reasons and provide alternative options where possible.</p> <p>This approach is necessary to enable us to provide a compassionate and caring decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust, as well as to comply with UNCRC Article 12 (respect for the views of the child).</p> <p>When conducting children's social work assessments, we adopt a GIRFEC practice model to consider a child's wellbeing needs and identify what additional support is required for the child and/or their family to overcome barriers to healthy development. Children//young people at the heart of this process are given meaningful opportunities to contribute to assessments and the subsequent development of a Child's Plan, ensuring their needs, interests and wishes are actively considered when formulating appropriate responses.</p> <p>When children are placed in care, our teams work hard to review these arrangements to ensure they are providing the best and most appropriate support to each individual's welfare needs. This statutory responsibility</p>

			<p>relates to children and young people who are cared for at home and away from home. Our teams use imaginative ways to engage our care experienced children and young people in placement reviews, ensuring their voices are heard and acted upon, even if they chose not to attend review meetings. Doing so ensures we comply with social work regulations and align with Article 25 of the UNCRC.</p>
6	Basic health and welfare	<p>Children have the right to health and welfare, including access to health services. Factors that impede children's abilities to lead healthy lives should be addressed, and support provided if there is difficulty in meeting basic needs.</p>	<p>On the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2018 Renfrewshire Council committed to fund a £4.5 million programme to tackle poverty in our communities. The programme sought to target support to families that need it most, remove barriers to participation for children and young people and support their access to health and wellbeing provision. This activity complements Article 27 (1-3) of the UNCRC which relates to providing children with an adequate standard of living.</p> <p>The programme supports the delivery of the Families First service, which provides early years and family support services, including targeted financial advice and parenting support. Our Healthier, Wealthier Children service provided targeted advice and support to new and expectant parents on managing changes to finances and supporting them to claim benefits they are entitled to. By March 2020, the service had helped generate additional income of £1.16m for 557 families in Renfrewshire.</p> <p>Funding has also been used to support 10 breakfast clubs, providing healthy breakfasts to children from low-income families. This alleviated</p>

			<p>each family’s financial strain, and ensured children started their school day ready to learn and engage with their peers. This was supplemented by financial support for costs associated with school, for example uniforms, food, transport and extra-curricular activities, providing equity of opportunity for those impacted by financial challenges.</p> <p>During holiday periods, our teams delivered our successful Street Stuff programme to children and young people in their own communities, providing inclusive social and leisure activities alongside free lunches to individuals who may not otherwise be able to experience the services provided by the programme.</p> <p>Over this time, good progress was made in improving families access to high quality early learning and childcare, which was subject to significant expansion. During school session 2018/19 around 600 children accessed 1140 hours of high-quality early learning and childcare. In 2019/20, approximately 1,500 1140 places were approved cross 31 Local Authority and 31 Provider establishments. This illustrates the good progress to ensure Renfrewshire’s children receive the best start in safe, nurturing environments, in accordance with UNCRC Article 18.</p>
7	Education, leisure and culture	<p>Focusses on the right of all children to an education that will help them fulfil their potential without discrimination. Child-centred and empowering education must support their capacity</p>	<p>We have developed approaches to ensure children and young people have the resilience and coping skills to engage fully with their learning while in school, supporting Article 28 of the UNCRC.</p> <p>Collaboration between Renfrewshire’s Health and Wellbeing Development Officer, Attainment Advisor and Renfrewshire Youth Voice facilitated an</p>

		<p>to enjoy the full range of children’s rights, including their right to express views and participate in their education. The education curriculum must be broad and complemented with opportunities for play, recreation, culture, rest and leisure.</p>	<p>extensive consultation exercise across primary and secondary schools in relation to Personal and Social Education. Findings informed the development of a ‘Framework for Personal and Social Education in Renfrewshire’ in association with other local authorities across the West Partnership. This activity demonstrates effective co-production and the successful incorporation of young people’s needs and requirements in designing interventions.</p> <p>Significant successes have been achieved through school counselling programmes which have sought to support young people who experience anxiety and depression. The Lifelink programme provided valuable counselling services for young people across all Renfrewshire secondary schools and one ASN school. Since July 2018, Lifelink has received 966 referrals for counselling. Pupil feedback gives an insight into how the service has helped them:</p> <p><i>“I felt that I could say things without having to worry about being judged.”</i>  <i>“It felt good to discuss things and get things off my chest.”</i>  <i>“I felt able to talk about things and learned about different types of anxiety to help me deal with things in the future.”</i></p> <p>Young people’s progress post-therapeutic intervention was evidenced via core data, indicators linked to GIFREC and robust case studies. Feedback from those who participated in the programme showed 100% felt better placed to manage their difficulties in the future, with 94% stating they felt included and understood whilst working towards their counselling goals. Post counselling, 80% of young people stated they felt they could cope in a safe and helpful way when faced with similar situations/difficulties in the future.</p>
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8	Special protection measures	<p>Focuses on vulnerable and marginalised children who require special protection. Such children are often most at risk of having their rights ignored or infringed. Children who require special protection measures include asylum-seeking and refugee children, child victims of trafficking or exploitation and children involved in the justice system.</p>	<p>The Council has an excellent track record in providing needs-based support to young people to minimise their exposure to the criminal justice system as far as possible, in accordance with UNCRC Articles 37 and 40.</p> <p>For young people up to the age of 15, Renfrewshire has a well-established multi-agency screening group that considers children who have come into conflict with the law, and who are not already subject to statutory supervision. This group identifies unmet need and ensures access to early intervention services proportionate to the level of risk/harm identified. This has significantly reduced the number of children being referred to the Children’s Reporter unnecessarily, and ensures that where possible children are diverted away from statutory intervention</p> <p>For those young people subject to statutory intervention and who continue to come into conflict with the law, our approach focuses on retaining young people on Compulsory Supervision Orders up to the age of 18. Through this, we have maximised the opportunity for young people to have as many of their offences as possible dealt with through the Hearing system, thus reducing their contact with the adult justice system. This has included the opportunity to access secure care instead of a young offender institution where deprivation of liberty has been necessary – thereby ensuring a therapeutic and child centred approach for as long as possible.</p> <p>Renfrewshire provides a bespoke Diversion from Prosecution service for 16–17-year-olds that are referred to the Procurator Fiscal. This is typically</p>

			<p>aimed at young people who have come into conflict with the law for the first time. Using an educational but informal groupwork approach, this programme succeeds in helping many young people to move on and have no further contact with the criminal justice system. Recently the scope of Diversion has extended to include more serious types of offences, which has enabled higher risk young people to avoid early contact with the justice system with the aim of them making positive and lasting changes</p>
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