

Checking our rights are being respected and protected

In 1991 the UK Government made an international promise to the United Nations to respect and protect the rights in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (or 'CRC' for short) in the UK. The CRC contains over 40 rights and protections for all children and young people (aged under 18). For more info about the CRC check out our factsheet [[insert title/link](#)].

This factsheet is about checking how CRC rights are respected and protected.

Is the CRC law?

In 1991 the UK promised it would do its very best to make sure the rights in the CRC are respected for children and young people here. But because the CRC is not yet fully part of UK law you can't go to court to complain if your rights in the CRC haven't been respected. For more info check out our 'CRC in the UK' factsheet [[insert title/link](#)].

So how are the rights in the CRC protected?

The CRC says that governments should take all steps they can to make sure the rights are respected and protected. This includes when governments pass laws or take decisions and actions which affect children and young people, they should be thinking about the rights in the CRC

Who is in charge of making sure this happens?

There is a special Committee in the United Nations that checks whether the rights in the CRC are being respected and protected by governments. The Committee is a group of 18 adults from different countries who are independent experts on children's rights.

What does the Committee do?

Governments have to send a report to the Committee every 5 years to explain how they are respecting and protecting the rights in the CRC. Alternative reports can also be sent to the Committee by other groups, including 'NGOs' (non-governmental organisations) such as charities, the Children's Commissioners, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The alternative reports can explain how well these groups think the government is doing to protect children's rights. See below how you can get involved in this.

The Committee looks at these reports and invites representatives from the government to a public meeting to ask them questions about their actions to protect and respect children's rights..

The Committee then writes its own report on how well it thinks the government is doing to protect children's rights. The Committee usually makes recommendations on what actions the government should take. For example when the Committee looked at the UK's report in 2008 they made recommendations for action on stopping

- authorities keeping children's DNA on file when they've got into trouble with the law
- widespread use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) for children
- high use of permanent and temporary schools exclusions.
- children seeking asylum being kept in detention centres.

How can I get involved?

Children and young people can also send their own views to the Committee about how well they think the government is doing to protect children's rights. This isn't about how your *individual* rights are being respected (or not) by a particular decision or action, it's about telling the Committee how you think children's rights *in general* are respected and protected in the UK. For more info check out our Get Involved factsheet [[insert title/link](#)].

Can I complain directly to the Committee if I think my rights are being ignored?

There is a new part to the CRC (called an 'Optional Protocol') which lets children and young people complain to the Committee about their individual situation and say why they think their rights have not been respected..

The UK haven't promised to do this (yet!), so you can't complain to the Committee directly about how your individual rights are being respected. But, remember, you can share your views with the Committee about how well you think the government is doing to protect children's rights in general.