



Child Friendly Complaints-handling Principles

These principles underpin how to handle and investigate complaints from or involving children, in a way that respects their rights under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC)**.





For Everyone Under 18

- For the purposes of complaints handling a child is defined as “anyone under the age of 18”.
- **All** concerns affecting any child will be handled in a way that meets **all** of their rights under the UNCRC.
- This includes concerns raised directly by a child, as well as concerns raised by an adult, either on a child’s behalf, or about matters that affect a child.



Article 1 (definition of the child)

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



Focused on Children’s Best Interests

- The best interests of any children affected will be at the heart of the complaints process. This means **all** decisions made or actions taken will treat the best interests of any children affected as a top priority.



Article 3 (best interests of the child)

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.



Trusting and Inclusive

- **Trust** will be placed in children to make decisions they can manage, recognising their increasing ability to make their own choices.
- Concerns will be handled in a way that respects the rights of their parent/s, guardian/s or other responsible adult/s to guide and direct them.
- If a child does not wish their parent/s, guardian/s or other responsible adult/s to be made aware of their concerns, their involvement will be decided by carefully weighing the child’s views, their best interests, and the rights of everyone involved.



Article 5 (parental guidance and a child’s evolving capacities)

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.



Centred on Children's Voices

- Children will be given the chance to express their views, feelings and wishes in **all** matters that affect them.
- Children's voices and views will **always** be listened to, taken seriously, and have real impact.
- Children will be asked how they want to communicate and things will be done their way whenever possible.
- Informed consent will be sought from the child affected where a concern has been raised by parent/s, guardian/s or other responsible adult/s on behalf of their child.



Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.



Kind and Supportive

- Children will be treated with kindness and understanding at all times, and they will never be treated differently for raising concerns.
- Every effort will be made to ensure children feel comfortable to freely and openly express their thoughts and opinions.
- Wherever possible, children will be supported to complain by people they know and trust.



Article 13 (freedom of expression)

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.





Confidential

- Nothing a child shares will be passed on without their permission, unless doing so is required to raise a child protection concern.
- Before speaking with any child about a complaint, explanations will be given about when things may need to be passed on without their permission. This will include explaining what happens if they say something that suggests they are at risk.
- If a child's concerns have to be shared, or their parent/s, guardian/s or other responsible adult/s involved, they will be told this, and why this needs to happen.
- If a child's concerns are shared this will be done as far as possible without identifying them.
- Where an investigation might mean other people could identify the child, this will be discussed with them for their views on whether they wish to continue.



Article 16 (right to privacy) 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.



Educational about Rights

- Information will be provided to children and any parent/s, guardian/s or other responsible adult/s about their rights under the UNCRC and they will be helped to understand what this means for them.



Article 18 (parental responsibilities and state assistance)

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.

Article 42 (knowledge of rights)

Governments must actively work to make sure children and adults know about the Convention.

Child Protection Concerns

Complaints procedures **should not be used** to investigate any concerns that suggest significant harm might have been caused to a child or that a child might be at risk of harm. If at any point, concerns are raised about possible harm to a child from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, these should always be shared with police or social work without delay. Complaints can subsequently be raised about the handling of child protection investigations, and such complaints should follow these Principles.