NHS Education for Scotland

Children's Rights Report

16th July 2024 – 31st March 2026









Executive Summary

This report outlines how NHS Education for Scotland (NES) is embedding children's rights in practice aligned to organisational strategies and within its national education, training and workforce development role. The report is presented across five UNCRC clusters: *General Measures of Implementation; General Principles of the UNCRC; Violence Against Children; Family Environment and Alternative Care;* and *Basic Health and Welfare*. It draws together nineteen 'rights in practice' examples with ten supplementary posters, including child friendly formats. The aim is to demonstrate how children's rights are actively upheld and advanced across NES' work. Collectively, they demonstrate how NES supports the realisation of children's rights through consistent, rights-based workforce development that influences practice across Scotland.

The report highlights NES' strong contribution to creating the conditions in which children's rights can be realised. Through national programmes, frameworks and professional learning, NES supports a confident, capable and rights-respecting workforce, with a focus on participation, inclusion, early intervention, safeguarding and reducing inequalities. We provide evidence of a clear commitment to children's rights, embedded in everyday practice, not treated as a standalone responsibility. NES supports duty bearers to understand and fulfil their UNCRC obligations through evidence informed learning, partnership working and co-production where.

The report demonstrates strong alignment with national priorities, including Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and The Promise. Collectively, the evidence demonstrates that NES is fulfilling its role as a public authority under the UNCRC, while continuing to reflect, learn and strengthen how children's rights are realised through education and workforce development.

Chief Executive Foreword

Children and young people have the right to grow up safe, listened to, and respected. At NHS Education for Scotland (NES), our role is to help make those rights real in everyday practice by supporting a workforce that is skilled, compassionate and confident in upholding children's rights across health and social care.

Our Children's Rights Report sets out what we have done and what we will do next to embed a rights based approach in our work. It reflects our responsibilities as a public authority and our commitment to meaningful participation, ensuring the voices and experiences of children, young people and families inform how we design, deliver and review learning.

We want to be clear to babies, children and young people that they matter. What they and others tell us about the importance of feeling safe, being treated fairly, being supported early and being listened to informs our decisions about what those working with them need to know and do. We are committed to prioritising these needs as we develop learning that influences practice across Scotland.

We recognise there is more to do. As NES transitioned to Public Services Delivery (PSD) Scotland on 1 April 2026, our preparations focused on continuity and stability: maintaining momentum on children's rights, strengthening leadership and governance, and embedding participation into the new organisation's priorities and ways of working.

Our aim is simple and unwavering; to secure better or further effect of children's rights, through workforce education that is evidence-based, accessible and responsive to what matters to babies, children and young people. We remain committed to transparency, learning and collaboration, and our child-friendly version of this report makes understanding our progress more accessible. Together, we will keep building a workforce, and a system, that respects, protects and fulfils children's rights across Scotland.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline progress on children's rights by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) during the period 16th July 2024 until 31st March 2026, with the final date also signfiying the conclusion of NES as an organisation.

The protection of children is fundamental to the realisation of their human rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that brings together civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in one framework. It recognises that every child has the right to grow up safe, supported and respected, and places clear responsibilities on the state to support children, young people and their families. In Scotland, the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 gives further legal effect to these rights. The Act places duties on public authorities, which includes NES, to act compatibly with the UNCRC requirements and to take proactive steps to secure better or further effect of children's rights in all relevant areas of their work.

Children and young people have the same human rights as adults. In addition, they have specific rights that recognise childhood as a unique and protected stage of life. These rights reflect the need for children and young people to be supported to grow, learn, play, develop and thrive with dignity, while having their safety, wellbeing and views respected. Public authorities have a responsibility to ensure that decisions, policies and practices recognise and uphold these rights, both in direct work with children and in the wider systems and services that affect their lives.

2. Introduction: NHS Education for Scotland

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) is a national health board responsible for education, training, workforce development, and the provision of digital and data services that support health and social care in Scotland. Through its national role, NES helps shape a skilled, confident and values driven workforce, contributing to improved population health, reduced inequalities and better outcomes for people in every community in Scotland.

2.1 Our Strategic Approach

NES operates within a clear strategic framework set out in Our Strategy 2023-26, which confirmed its position as a collaborative, innovative and inclusive learning organisation. Central to this strategy is a focus on people, partnerships and performance, recognising that high quality education and workforce development are essential to the sustainability, safety and quality of health and social care services.

The NES Learning and Education Strategy 2023 - 2026 further strengthens this focus, setting out our commitment to supporting rights-based, high-quality care and outcomes through a skilled, capable and resilient workforce. The strategy explicitly recognises NES' role in promoting and upholding human rights through education and training. This includes supporting staff to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns, and to provide care that is compassionate, inclusive and respectful of the rights of children and young people.

Our work at NES is informed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2029 which sets out how we will contribute to reducing inequalities, promoting fairness and embedding inclusive practice across education, training and workforce development. This strategy reinforces our responsibility as a public authority to protect and uphold rights, recognising that inequity and discrimination can have a significant impact on life chances, including for children and young people.

As set out in the Corporate Strategy and Learning and Education Strategy, our role is to support a workforce that is skilled, trauma informed and rights based. This helps enable health and social care services to provide compassionate, consistent and supportive care for children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced care. As a public body, we recognise our wider responsibilities to future generations, and this includes commitments to The Promise through education, training and workforce development. We fulfil our responsibilities as a Corporate Parent by embedding awareness of care experience, safeguarding and children's rights within education and training, and by working in partnership with others to support improved outcomes and wellbeing for care experienced children and young people across Scotland. Our wider responsibilities are also acknowledged in the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2024-2027 which supports more sustainable ways of delivery education and training.

In summary, our strategic approach provides the framework through which NES meets its statutory duties, including those under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. They guide how we design and deliver education, training and support in ways that recognise the rights of children and young people and support the wider health and social care system to respect, protect and fulfil those rights in practice.

3. Our progress on children's rights

We recognise our vital contribution through workforce education and training to promote and protect children's rights. As with our previous children's rights reports to fulfil our duties within the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, we have included our progress aligned to the UNCRC clusters, those most applicable to our work at NES.

3.1 General measures of implementation

This cluster focuses on the systems, leadership and processes public authorities need to embed children's rights across all their work, including governance, training, participation, monitoring and partnership working. It provides the foundation for delivering and sustaining children's rights in practice with specific alignment to UNCRC Article 4.

We are committed to ensuring that both our workforce and the wider health and social care workforce understand the UNCRC and how to apply a children's rights-based approach in practice. This includes supporting the realisation of children's rights and helping to make those rights meaningful in everyday decision-making, in line with Article 4 and NES' statutory duties as a public authority. Recognising the need for sustained, cross organisational leadership in relation to women, children, young people and families, NES established the Women, Children, Young People and Families (WCYPF) Group in 2019. This group brings together expertise from across Directorates and remains an important part of our infrastructure, providing a collaborative forum to:

- support strategic alignment across NES priorities
- strengthen shared understanding of children's rights, safeguarding and equity
- influence education, training and workforce development activity
- support alignment with relevant national drivers, including the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, The Promise, GIRFEC and Corporate Parenting

Through the WCYPF group, a children's rights subgroup was established in 2023. The subgroup played a vital role in promoting a consistent rights-based approach across NES, helping ensure that the needs and rights of children and young people are considered throughout planning, delivery and improvement work.

Within our organisational systems and processes, we have strengthened our approach to financial and resource planning to uphold children's rights in budgetary decisions. We recognise budgeting as a core mechanism through which rights are realised, requiring transparency and accountability in how resources are allocated and decisions are reached. Through this, we have applied children's rights-based approaches to, for example, our savings reviews and within our finance, procurement and planning processes. Our approach is aligned to NES and NHS Scotland values, strengthening them through a rights-based lens, which is further enhanced within our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-2029.

NES is a learning organisation committed to developing a skilled, confident and rights respecting workforce, both within our own organisation and across the wider health and social care system. Our approach is grounded in continuous improvement, evidence-informed education and practice and a strong commitment to children's rights. We recognise that children's rights can only be fully realised when the workforce have the knowledge, confidence and capability to embed principles in everyday practice. Learning resources about children's rights are available through our online digital platform TURAS Learn, ensuring that all staff, regardless of their role, have access to high quality learning resources to support their understanding of the UNCRC.

We maintain a clear expectation that all NES staff complete essential learning. Included in this suite of learning is safeguarding which integrates rights-based practice. Our compliance with child protection and adult support and protection learning at informed level exceeds 90%, demonstrating both organisational commitment and individual accountability in ensuring a safe, rights-respecting environment. In addition, all NES staff complete the Introduction to Equality, Diversity and Human Rights module.

We actively promote awareness of the experiences, rights and voices of Care Experienced people through our commitment to The Promise, responsibilities as Corporate Parents and within UNCRC duties. Our leadership and participation in Care Experienced Week during the past 5-years reflects our commitment to championing the rights of Care Experienced children, young people and adults, amplifying their voices and increasing understanding across our workforce.

3.2 General principles of the UNCRC

This cluster sets out the four core principles that underpin all children's rights: non-discrimination (Article 2), best interests (Article 3), survival and development (Article 6), and the right to be heard (Article 12). These principles guide how public authorities plan, deliver and review their work, ensuring children's rights are applied fairly, consistently and in ways that address inequality and promote wellbeing.

We are committed to meaningful engagement with children and young people, in line with Article 12 of the UNCRC, which affirms children's right to express their views and to have those views taken seriously in matters that affect them. This commitment is reflected in our education, training and improvement activity, and is further enhanced through the work of the Involving People and Communities workstream. This work has supported consistent, inclusive and proportionate approaches to engagement across NES. During the reporting period, this workstream has strengthened children's rights to be heard by developing consistent, rights-based approaches to participation across NES. This includes creation of the Involving People and Communities framework which is currently in pilot phase. The framework provides clear principles and practical guidance to support staff to involve babies, children and young people safely, proportionately and meaningfully in the design, delivery and review of education and training. Alongside this, a remuneration policy is in development to promote fair and transparent recognition of children, young people and families' contributions. This includes removing financial and practical barriers to participation through expense reimbursement and appropriate recognition of time and expertise. The piloting of the Involving People and

Communities framework is already informing programme improvement, including our work focused on young carers referenced in this report.

Children and young people's views are also shaping wider organisational processes such as impact assessment and the commissioning of new learning resources through improved education, quality and safety processes. This work supports a shift towards earlier, more consistent and embedded participation, helping ensure that babies, children and young people's perspectives influence decision making across NES. To enable a child-centred focus within our work, we integrate Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) as Scotland's national approach to supporting children and young people. It aims is to ensure every child gets the right help at the right time so they can reach their full potential. Grounded in the UNCRC, GIRFEC is child-centred and rights-based, focused on wellbeing using eight wellbeing indicators to promote early intervention and prevention within a multi-agency landscape.

Rights in Practice 1: Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

We have a key role supporting the workforce to deliver GIRFEC in practice through learning and educational resources, by embedding GIRFEC in workforce development, collaborating with multi-agency partners to deliver consistent messages, and focusing on practice change by applying GIRFEC principles. Our GIRFEC and Children's Rights learning site on Turas ensures everyone has access to learning and resources to support their practice.

We recognise that children's rights begin from birth, and that babies, children and young people depend on a skilled and compassionate workforce to support their right to survive and develop (Article 6). This is important in areas such as maternity, neonatal, child health, hospital and prehospital care where high-quality, evidence-based education and training directly influence outcomes, experiences and safety. By strengthening both participation and workforce capability, we aim to ensure that the voices of babies and their best interests are reflected in the systems and services that impact on them.

Rights in Practice 2: Voice, partnerships and workforce learning

To implement the ‘voice of the infant’ guidance, NES collaborated with specialist infant mental health practitioners to develop resources for professionals working with infants and their families. These resources recognise infants as active communicators and the importance of promoting responsive, nurturing caregiving. Applying a children’s rights approach in infancy helps ensure that participation begins from birth. You can read more in our poster series.

In its third decade of delivery in Scotland, the Scottish Multiprofessional Maternity Development Programme (SMMDP) is our national education and workforce development programme. SMMDP supports the ongoing development of the maternity and neonatal workforce in Scotland by strengthening multiprofessional learning, leadership and collaborative practice across services. It is grounded in the understanding that safe, effective and compassionate maternity care relies on strong teamwork and shared responsibility across professional boundaries.

Rights in Practice 3: SMMDP

SMMDP provides nationally coordinated maternity and neonatal clinical skills training across Scotland, delivering over 120 courses each year to around 1400 staff. Its multiprofessional model strengthens teamwork, builds confidence and competence, and supports safer and responsive maternity care. By equipping staff to recognise risk early and provide evidence-based care, SMMDP supports the realisation of children’s rights by strengthening the maternity and neonatal workforce to deliver safe and person-centred care, ensuring that every child has the best possible start in life (Article 6).

We recognise our own journey to continually improving how we involve children, young people and families. We have been using our learning to further embed and advocate participation, transparency and accountability across health and social care. Part of these improvements are being realised through the Youth Academy

within NHS Scotland Academy, where there are partnerships with schools to promote health and wellbeing and promote future health and social care careers.

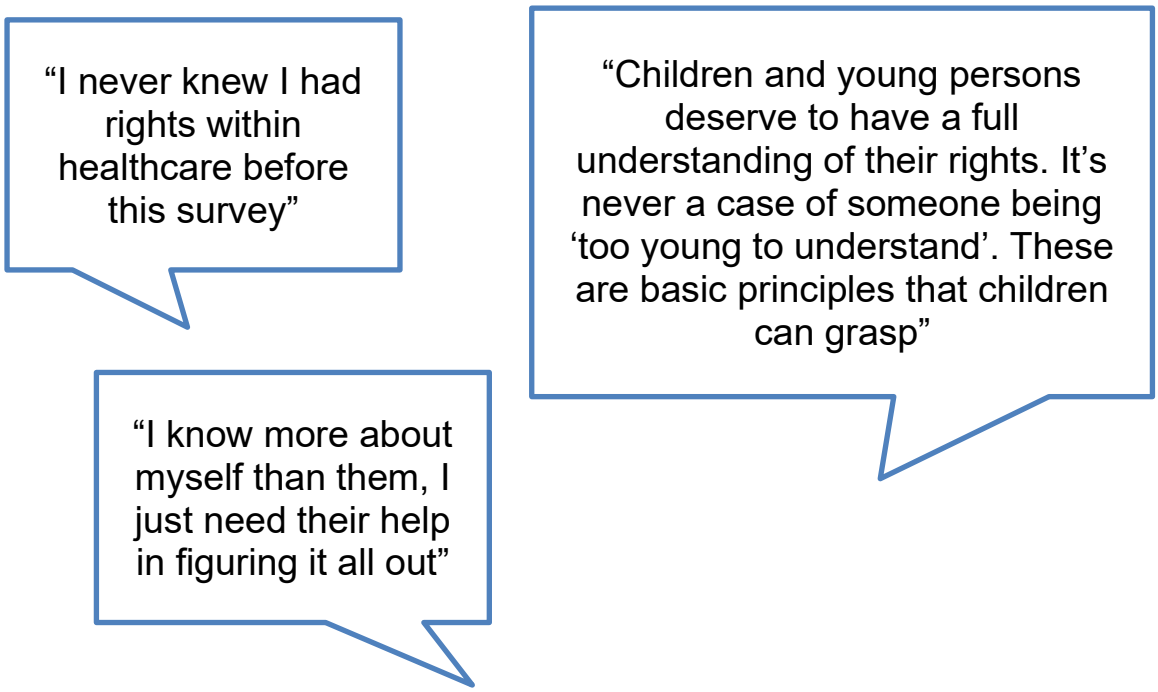
Rights in Practice 4: Youth Academy

The Youth Academy delivers programmes that support children and young people to understand health, wellbeing and future careers in health and social care, helping them make informed choices. By engaging with children and young people early, the Youth Academy is helping to reduce inequalities in awareness, aspiration and opportunity and through a rights-based approach upholds a commitment to fairness, inclusion and wellbeing. You can read more in our poster series.

Our participation work was further strengthened in 2025 through a partnership with Young Scot, which aimed to better understand how children and young people experience their rights in healthcare. A micro survey gathered 371 responses from children and young people across Scotland.

Rights in Practice 5: Voice and Participation

The survey, in partnership with Young Scot, explored how aware children and young people are of their rights, whether they felt listened to, involved in decisions, and whether their rights were clearly explained during healthcare encounters. The responses offered mixed views with many reporting positive interactions and feeling respected, but their awareness of children's rights in healthcare was more limited. These findings are being utilised to directly support Article 12, highlighting the need to strengthen how services listen to, communicate with, and involve children and young people. The insights have informed our approach to our children's rights report and shared with NHS Board leads to help drive improvements and embed voices in everyday practice. Below are some comments from children and young people who responded to the survey.



3.3 Violence against children

This cluster focuses on children's rights to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and harm. It emphasises prevention, early recognition and effective response, and the need for public authorities and the workforce to work together in trauma-informed, rights-respecting ways to keep children safe. Children in Scotland have the right to be safe, protected from harm and cared for in environments that respect their rights and needs, as set out in Article 19 of the UNCRC. Protecting children and young people from violence, abuse and neglect is a shared responsibility, and at NES, we have an important role in supporting the wider health and social care workforce to recognise risk, respond appropriately and help prevent harm.

We have continued to strengthen this contribution through national education and learning resources that build knowledge, skills and confidence across the workforce. Through our key role within the National Trauma Transformation Programme, we have led the development and delivery of learning resources that promote

trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practice, helping staff understand the impact of trauma across the life course and supporting recovery in line with Article 39.

In relation to child protection and adult support and protection we reviewed and re-published eLearning resources at informed and skilled levels, supporting staff across health and social care to meet their statutory duties to protect children and adults at risk. These resources strengthen understanding of roles and responsibilities, recognising signs of harm, and taking appropriate action to safeguard individuals and communities. Our informed level modules for child protection and adult support and protection now form part of a Once for Scotland suite of mandatory learning for all Agenda for Change staff in NHS Scotland.

Recognising the wider responsibilities of public protection, we partnered with Public Health Scotland to develop an informed level eLearning module about Gender-Based Violence (GBV) to help the workforce understand the impacts of GBV on individuals, families and communities. The resource highlights the specific risks and harms experienced by children and young people, ensuring staff can recognise how GBV affects their safety, wellbeing and rights.

NES participates in the Equally Safe at Work programme, which means we are taking action to tackle gender inequality in the workplace and ensure employees are safe and protected at work and free from GBV, harassment, and discrimination. As part of this work, information and guidance is available for staff which includes how to access employee support, specialist help and support and safety planning resources. Guides are available for employees and managers to help everyone understand the Once for Scotland GBV policy.

Rights in Practice 6: Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

We are committed to Scotland's Equally Safe Strategy to address violence against women and girls. We want to ensure the workforce is equipped to recognise and respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in ways that uphold human rights and the human rights of children by promoting the safety of

women, children and families. The eLearning about GBV supports prevention, early identification and effective response, reinforcing a rights-based, compassionate and trauma informed approach across services. By strengthening workforce understanding and confidence, the provision of evidence-informed learning contributes to helping those affected by GBV, particularly children, to receive safe, sensitive and appropriate support.

In summary, our key role in the design and delivery of national learning resources demonstrate our ongoing commitment to supporting the prevention of harm, the protection of children, and the recovery and wellbeing of those affected by trauma. We will continue to review and strengthen the learning we provide to ensure it remains evidence-based, accessible and aligned with national priorities and children's rights.

3.4 Family environment and alternative care

This cluster focuses on children's rights to be supported within their families wherever possible, and to receive special protection, stability and care when alternative arrangements are needed. It emphasises prevention, family-centred practice and the additional responsibilities of public authorities as Corporate Parents.

At NES, we recognise the important role that parents, carers and families play in supporting children's development and wellbeing, as well as knowing the vital skilled and compassionate support young carers need. As a national education body, NES contributes to this by supporting a workforce that is equipped to promote prevention, early intervention and family-centred, rights-based practice.

Rights in Practice 7: Caring for Young Carers

Young carers balance school, relationships, and their own health and wellbeing. Without the right support, they can face barriers to education, opportunities and access to services. NES developed learning and resources to help the workforce better understand the needs and rights of young carers, including eLearning and a health and social care career guide for young

carers. By combining workforce learning with targeted resources for young people, NES is helping raise awareness and create more supportive environments. You can read more in our poster series.

Our education and training activity is informed by national priorities, policies and strategies, including those focused on mental health, early years, trauma-informed practice and The Promise. Our commitment to The Promise and responsibilities as a Corporate Parent is explicit within Our Strategy 2023-26 and to help us in our own learning journey to #KeepThePromise, we established The Promise Working Group.

Rights in Practice 8: Keeping The Promise at NES

Through our collaborative project, we established a cross-directorate working group to plan activities which support our own route map aligned to Plan 24-30. Staff awareness sessions about The Promise were designed and delivered, alongside resources to increase everyone's understanding about how we are Keeping the Promise at NES. We are committed to playing our part in upholding the rights, voices, and experiences of Care Experienced children, young people, adults and families through our work. Our Sway resource explains more about the five foundations of The Promise and our contribution.

Over recent years, we have continued to strengthen learning that supports children, young people and families at points of vulnerability. This includes education in psychological and relational skills, trauma-informed approaches, perinatal and infant mental health, and whole family support, all of which contribute to earlier, more preventative responses that help families stay together where it is safe to do so.

Rights in Practice 9: Thriving Futures, Trauma Responsive Caregiving

Kinship carers, foster carers and adoptive parents play a vital role in supporting children and young people who have experienced trauma, adversity and loss. As part of the National Trauma Transformation Programme, NES developed a trauma informed education programme which

was successfully piloted with foster carers with their feedback informing wider roll out. By providing learning on trauma-responsive caregiving, NES is helping to strengthen the environments where children live, grow and build relationships. You can read more in our poster series.

We recognise the specific rights and needs of Care Experienced children and young people, and the additional responsibilities of public bodies in supporting them. Through education, training and workforce development, we support the workforce to understand care experience, attachment and trauma, and to provide compassionate and consistent support across services.

Rights in Practice 9: Children's Hearing System

NES is working with the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) within the learning leads group to develop clear, accessible learning that helps professionals understand the Children's Hearings System and their role within it. A key output includes developments to the SCRA Learning Hub. This work supports The Promise and the UNCRC including being heard (Article 12), protected from harm (Article 19), and having decisions made in their best interests (Article 3) by ensuring practitioners can help babies, children and young people get the right support at the right time.

By strengthening workforce capability and confidence, we contribute to systems that better support families, reduce the need for crisis interventions, and promote safe, nurturing environments in which children and young people can develop, belong and thrive. Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) in Scotland supports young, first-time parents from early pregnancy until their child turns two, helping ensure babies have the best possible start in life. Its approach reflects Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and UNCRC by promoting children's rights to health, development, protection and participation. Led by NES, the FNP education programme equips family nurses with the specialist knowledge and reflective skills needed to deliver this evidence-based programme, grounded key theoretical models including attachment theory, self-efficacy and human ecology. This ensures that support is tailored to each family's context and that children's rights are translated into meaningful, everyday practice.

Rights in Practice 10: Family Nurse Partnership (FNP)

To complement formal education pathways, the FNP Education Team developed accessible learning resources which have benefited practitioners and wider stakeholders nationally and internationally. This includes a podcast series Let's Talk FNP which explores key aspects of FNP practice through the five client principles. These podcasts serve as a valuable tool for knowledge sharing, reflection, and engagement, helping to bring children's rights to life in a practical and relatable way. They also contribute to a broader understanding of how early intervention and skilled family nursing practice can positively influence outcomes for children.

The NES Parenting Workstream strengthens children's rights to nurturing family life by expanding access to evidence-based support for parents and carers across Scotland. Working with local and national partners, it provides training and education for practitioners to deliver programmes that improve parent-child relationships, promote safe and predictable home environments, and support children's social, emotional and behavioural development.

By supporting mental health and wellbeing from pre-birth, the workstream helps ensure children have the greatest opportunity to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected, in line with Scotland's national commitments to children and young people. Its training offers begin with a preventative, early-intervention focus on Infant Mental Health (IMH), providing support through pregnancy, birth and the early years. A range of IMH-focused training programmes is available, as outlined in the Infant Mental Health Training Plan. Together, these approaches help families access the skills and support they need to give every child the best possible start in life.

Rights in Practice 11: Parenting Workstream

Strong, nurturing relationships are the foundation of children's health, wellbeing and development. NES supports parents and the workforce through the parenting workstream in NES Psychology by promoting trauma-informed learning and attachment-based approaches to strengthen parent-child

relationships. Through the Togetherness Online Learning Pathways and Circle of Security Parenting training parents can understand more about how trauma and attachment can strengthen children's experiences from the earliest years. Through preventative and relationship-based approaches, NES is helping create environments where children can feel safe, secure and able to thrive. You can read more in our poster series.

3.5 Basic health and welfare

This cluster brings together the rights that ensure every child has the best possible start in life and the support they need to grow, develop and thrive. It recognises that children's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing is shaped not only by access to healthcare, but also by the wider conditions in which they live, learn and grow. Central to this cluster is the understanding that children's wellbeing depends on early, timely and evidence-based support, delivered by a skilled and compassionate workforce. For public bodies, this cluster emphasises the importance of prevention, early intervention and equity, recognising that some children experience higher levels of need or face additional barriers to good health and wellbeing.

Rights in Practice 12: Childsmile

Childsmile is a national oral health improvement programme for babies, children and families. NES provides a qualification in Childsmile where learners engage with scenario-based learning which now incorporates children's rights, GIRFEC and child protection into everyday dental practice, helping ensure every child receives care that is safe, supportive and rights-respecting. You can read more in our poster series.

Our focus on breastfeeding and infant feeding supports children's rights to health, nutrition and nurturing care by strengthening the skills and confidence of multi-professional colleagues who work with families, including early learning settings. We have supported 59 colleagues to complete infant feeding mentor training in the past year.

Rights in Practice 13: Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland

In line with GIRFEC wellbeing indicators ensuring every child grows up safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included - NES developed evidence-based resources that promote consistent and compassionate support for families. Our Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland module for Early Learning and Childcare staff helps shift culture and practice by creating supportive environments for breastfeeding families. Grounded in the Curriculum for Excellence and the UNCRC, the module highlights breastfeeding as a global public health issue and reinforces infants' rights to optimal nutrition, nurturing care and the best possible start in life.

We continue to ensure that the health and social care workforce across Scotland has access to high-quality, evidence-based education and learning resources that support the health and wellbeing of babies, children and young people, including children with disabilities and additional needs (Articles 23 and 24 of the UNCRC). Through our national education and digital platforms, resources are designed to be accessible, inclusive and responsive to emerging evidence and practice.

Rights in Practice 14: Reducing mental health inequalities

Mental health inequalities, trauma and the prevention of self-harm and suicide are priorities across health and social care services. NES launched eLearning in 2025 which incorporates fictional characters based on lived and living experience with children's rights integral helping ensure rights-based trauma-informed approaches are part of everyday practice. This work strengthens prevention, awareness, and compassionate care across the workforce to support better mental health outcomes for children, young people and families. You can read more in our poster series.

The National Trauma Transformation Programme (NTTP) supports a whole-system approach to preventing and mitigating the impact of psychological trauma, including adversity experienced in childhood, and strengthens workforce capability to deliver trauma-informed and trauma-responsive services across health and social care. The

programme supports resilience, recovery and wellbeing for children, young people and adults, and continues to evolve in line with national priorities and learning from practice.

Our learning offers reflect a strong commitment to prevention, early intervention and equity, and to supporting a workforce that can respond confidently and effectively to the diverse health and wellbeing needs of children and young people across Scotland. Specialist Community Public Health Nursing (SCPHN) is a distinct and specialist post registration qualification with specific standards of proficiency and education defined by the Nursing and Midwifery Council. NES have had a key role in the developments within the SCPHN fields of health visiting and school nursing in Scotland, where refocused roles have required enhanced continuing professional development. Within the Scottish context, these roles are grounded in GIRFEC and UNCRC.

Health visiting in Scotland is a universal, home visiting service that supports all families from pregnancy until a child starts school. Delivered through a Universal Pathway, the service provides a consistent programme of home visits and child health reviews, offering support, nurturing care and timely identification of concerns.

Rights in Practice 15: Universal Health Visiting Pathway

We co-designed and published the Universal Health Visiting Pathway Learning Site which strengthens the universal offer by providing a national, evidence-based learning resource for the health visiting and family nursing workforce. It supports practitioners to deliver high-quality, rights-based care through guidance, tools and learning modules aligned to the universal pathway. The learning site is grounded in GIRFEC and UNCRC and reinforces the importance of understanding each child's needs in the context of their family and community, ensuring that health visitors have the skills and confidence to identify concerns early and support families in accessing the right help at the right time.

The refocused SCPHN school nursing role provides a clear framework for supporting children and young people through ten priority areas and pathways. This is to ensure

a consistent, proactive and equitable approach to meeting health and wellbeing needs across Scotland. We have worked with children, young people and a range of colleagues to design creative ways of raising awareness about the school nursing role.

Rights in Practice 16: School Nursing Awareness Resources

In partnership with school nursing leads and children and young people (CYP) in Scotland, a suite of resources was developed to ensure CYP get the right help at the right time. The resources are for CYP, parents, carers, families and anyone working with CYP or who have an interest in learning more about school nursing. The animations were co-designed and narrated by primary and secondary aged CYP.

An important part of improving outcomes for children is through early intervention and prevention. The National Early Language and Communication (NELC) team provide national leadership to strengthen early language and communication across universal and targeted services. The work recognises that speech, language and communication is fundamental to children's rights, learning, wellbeing and positive outcomes and a core feature is collaboration with local areas to embed sustainable change.

Rights in Practice 17: Early Language and Communication (NELC)

The National Early Language and Communication (NELC) project became part of NES in September 2025. The project team had a pivotal role in the development of the Scottish Governments National Early Years Speech, Language and Communication Action Plan and now in supporting its implementation. The project's impact can be seen through workforce engagement and the Chatting Together messages, which promote simple, everyday interactions, talking, listening, playing and responding. This rights-based approach supports children's development from the earliest stages, reduces inequalities, and upholds the UNCRC. Supporting the development of speech, language and communication is key to realising

children's rights, particularly their right to be heard, to express themselves and to reach their full potential.

NES Psychology and NMAHP are building capacity in the psychological therapies workforce to deliver neurodivergence-affirming, adapted interventions that are accessible, respectful of difference, and strengths-focused. NES has developed a national guide, Delivering Effective Psychological Therapies and Interventions for Autistic and Otherwise Neurodivergent People, now included in the NES MATRIX. A range of workforce development activities are underway; a few examples are included below.

Rights in Practice 18: Let's introduce anxiety management (LIAM)

The adapted LIAM programme for neurodivergent children and young people (CYP) aged 7+ includes parent information sheets and structured homework tasks, to involve families and support generalisation of skills. Clinical outcomes from 298 CYP show statistically significant progress, $p < 0.001$, in goal attainment and reductions in distress.

Rights in Practice 19: Let's introduce learning about (LILA)

We have co-produced Let's Introduce Learning About…Strengths, Senses & Differences for neurodivergent CYP aged 7+, with no diagnostic requirement. Delivered by staff already trained in LIAM, LILA consists of three sessions supporting understanding of neurodivergent profiles. Since June 2025, NES has trained 660 multi-agency staff across Scotland to deliver LILA in community settings. Parent information sheets and homework tasks ensure families are involved and able to support their child.

NES programmes are effective and accessible because they are co-designed with practitioners and people with lived experience, ensuring real-world relevance. Implementation science guides all training, with coaching, practitioner networks and evaluation (including clinical outcome data) supporting meaningful and sustained changes in practice. All resources are made freely available nationally via Turas

Learn, with recorded webinars enabling flexible, on-demand learning. Visibility and uptake are further strengthened through mailing lists, newsletters and inclusion of all neurodivergence-related resources in the Digital Learning Map.

4. Next steps to secure better or further effect of children's rights

NES transitioned to Public Services Delivery (PSD) Scotland on 1 April 2026; this period of organisational change presents both a responsibility and an opportunity to further strengthen the protection and promotion of children's rights. We are proud of the progress in embedding rights-based, trauma-informed and responsive approaches through education and workforce development at NES. We also recognise that securing better or further effect of children's rights requires sustained focus, clear governance and continuity through transition.

Through the establishment of PSD Scotland, our focus will be on ensuring that children's rights are not only maintained but strengthened through organisational change. This includes using learning from UNCRC reporting, corporate parenting activity and engagement with children and young people to inform the design, priorities and culture of the new organisation.

Key areas of focus include:

- **Embedding children's rights at the point of transition**
  Ensuring that UNCRC duties, safeguarding responsibilities and corporate parenting commitments are explicitly considered within transition planning, governance structures and early priorities for PSD Scotland, so that children's rights remain visible and integral from the outset.
- **Strengthening leadership, accountability and assurance**
  Continuation of the clear senior ownership and oversight of children's rights, including the legislative arrangements which will provide confidence that duties are met.
- **Participation and lived experience**
  Build on participation work to strengthen meaningful, proportionate involvement of children, young people and families in shaping education,

learning and improvement activity, recognising this as essential to Article 12 and rights-based practice.

- **Sustaining and evolving the national learning offers**
  Ensuring continuity and governance of key national education resources, including public protection, children's rights, trauma-informed practice.
- **Supporting the workforce through change**
  Continuing to equip the workforce with the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to deliver compassionate, inclusive and rights-respecting care, particularly for children and young people who experience inequality, adversity or care experience.

Through these actions, NES aims to ensure that the transition to PSD Scotland strengthens the system's ability to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. This approach reflects our commitment to learning, transparency and continuous improvement, and provides a clear foundation for PSD Scotland to build upon in meeting its statutory responsibilities and national ambitions for children and young people in Scotland.

Organisational change brings a risk of losing focus, but also an opportunity to reset expectations. NES is committed to ensuring that children's rights remain central through transition, and that PSD Scotland is positioned to build on this work with clarity, accountability and ambition.

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