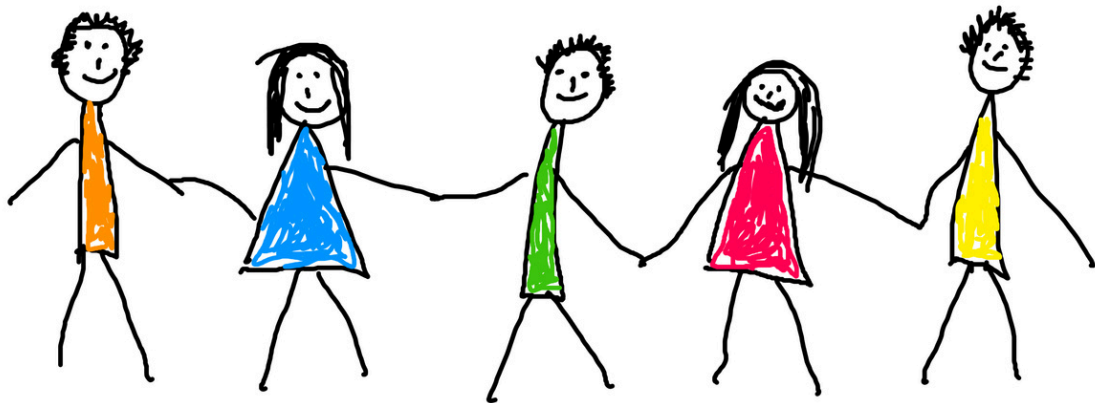

Our Journey to Advancing Children's Rights in NHS Lothian 2024-26



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UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Children's
COMMISSIONER



Survival



You have a right to life, good food, water, and to grow up healthy

Development



You have a right to an education and time to relax and play

Participation



You have a right to say how you feel, be listened to, and taken seriously

Protection



You have a right to be treated well and not be hurt by anyone

<p>1 Everyone under 18 has these rights</p>	<p>2 All children have these rights</p>	<p>3 Adults must do what's best for me</p>	<p>4 The Government should make sure my rights are respected</p>	<p>5 The Government should respect the right of my family to help me know about my rights</p>	<p>6 I should be supported to live and grow</p>
<p>7 I have a right to a name and to belong to a country</p>	<p>8 I have a right to an identity</p>	<p>9 I have a right to live with a family who cares for me</p>	<p>10 I have the right to see my family if they live in another country</p>	<p>11 I have the right not to be taken out of the country illegally</p>	<p>12 I have the right to be listened to, and taken seriously</p>
<p>13 I have the right to keep my own secrets and information</p>	<p>14 I have the right to have my own thoughts and beliefs, and to choose my religion, with my parents' guidance</p>	<p>15 I have the right to meet with friends and to join groups</p>	<p>16 I have the right to keep some things private</p>	<p>17 I have the right to get information in lots of ways, as long as it's safe</p>	<p>18 I have the right to be brought up by both parents if possible</p>
<p>19 I have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated</p>	<p>20 I have the right to special protection and help if I can't live with my own family</p>	<p>21 I have the right to have the best care if I am adopted</p>	<p>22 If I am a refugee, I have the same rights as children born in that country</p>	<p>23 If I have a disability, I have the right to special care and education</p>	<p>24 I have the right to good healthy food, clean water and good food</p>
<p>25 If I am not living with my family, people should keep checking I am safe and happy</p>	<p>26 My family should get the money they need to help bring me up</p>	<p>27 I have the right to have a proper house, food and clothing</p>	<p>28 I have the right to an education</p>	<p>29 I have the right to an education which develops my personality, respects for others rights and the environment</p>	<p>30 I have a right to speak my own language and to follow my family's way of life</p>
<p>31 I have a right to relax and play</p>	<p>32 I should not be made to do dangerous work</p>	<p>33 I should be protected from dangerous drugs</p>	<p>34 Nobody should touch me in ways that make me feel uncomfortable, unsafe or sad</p>	<p>35 I should not be abducted, sold or trafficked</p>	<p>36 I have the right to be kept safe from things that could harm my development</p>
<p>37 I have the right not to be punished in a cruel or harmful way</p>	<p>38 I am not allowed to join the army until I am 15</p>	<p>39 I have the right to help if I have been hurt, neglected or badly treated</p>	<p>40 I have the right to legal help and to be treated fairly if I have been accused of breaking the law</p>	<p>41 Where our country treats us better than the others we should keep up the good work</p>	<p>42 Everyone should know about the UNCRC</p>

Welcome

NHS Lothian is committed to ensuring that the rights of children and young people are understood, respected and embedded in everything we do. The incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) marks an important milestone towards Scotland becoming a nation where every child can flourish, and we are proud to play our part in making that vision a reality.

This report highlights the progress we have made so far and the strong foundations already in place across our organisation. Every day, colleagues across NHS Lothian work to deliver services that support children and young people to be safe, healthy, heard and respected. We have strengthened awareness of children's rights, developed new approaches to participation and engagement, and continued to build a culture where children's rights are everyone's business. We recognise, however, that incorporation is not a destination but a journey. There is still much to learn and opportunities to improve. We remain committed to listening, reflecting and working together to ensure children's rights continue to shape our decisions, services and priorities.

This work would not be possible without the support and commitment of our many partners across health, local authorities, the third sector and other agencies. We are grateful for the collaborative spirit that helps us achieve more together than we could alone.

Most importantly, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the children and young people who have helped to co-design our framework, implementation plan and this report. Your experiences, ideas and insights have shaped our approach and continue to guide us. Your voices matter, and your contribution is helping to create a better future for children and young people across Lothian.



Pamela Murray, Child Health Commissioner

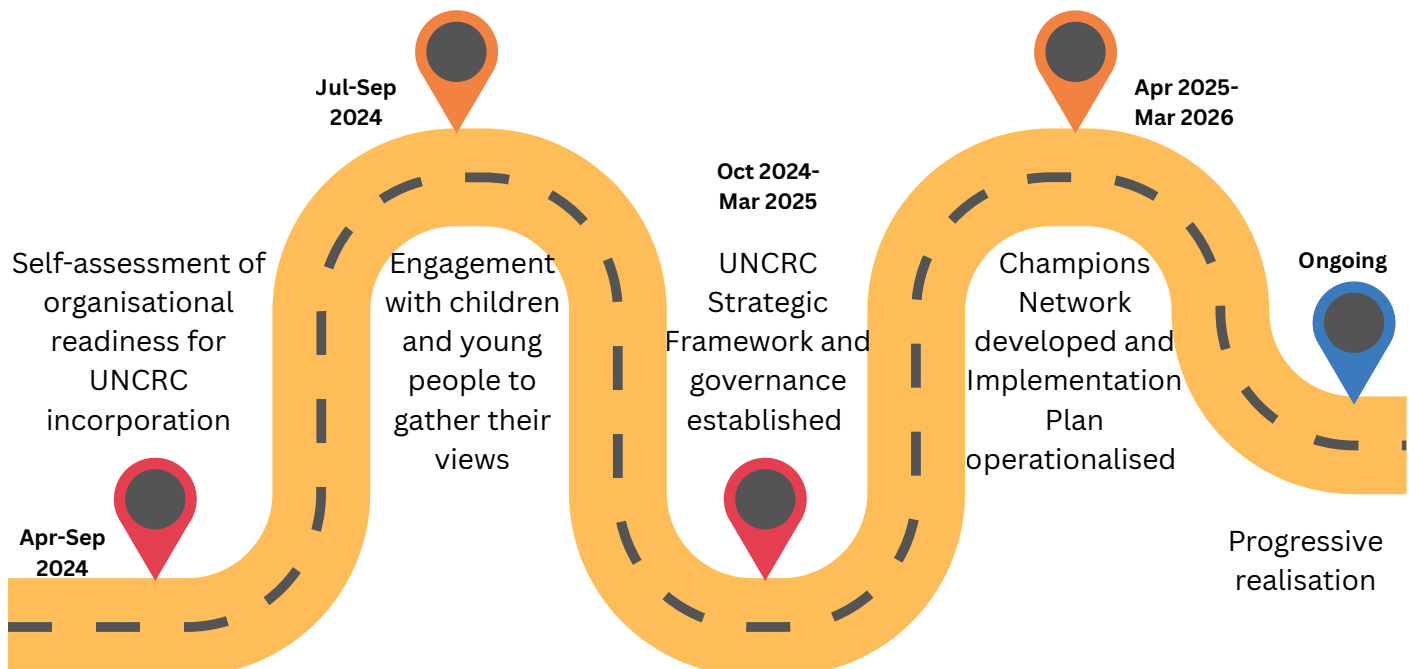
Understanding where we started

Our journey towards upholding children's rights in NHS Lothian began a long time before the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 came into force. Across almost four decades since the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in the United Kingdom, steps were being taken to advance children's rights within NHS Lothian services. However, the incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law provided the opportunity and requirement for a renewed focus on children's rights. Most importantly, the new law encouraged us to take time to reflect on what was working well, and more significantly, on where we needed to improve.

This 'renewed focus' journey began in the Spring of 2024. This report describes the steps we have taken between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2026 to advance children's rights, along with planned activity during the next 3-year reporting period.

This report has been designed to tell the story of our children's rights journey over the last two years. The report does not seek to detail every action taken within every service area, rather it aims to provide the reader with an understanding of our strategic approach, progress that has been made, and plans that will be taken forward during the next reporting period towards the progressive realisation of children's UNCRC rights.

From self-assessment to action, 2024-26



UNCRC Self-Assessment

Our UNCRC Incorporation journey began with a self-assessment of organisational readiness informed by the ***Getting Ready for UNCRC Incorporation Framework*** designed by the Improvement Service. Over a four-month period, commencing in May 2024, staff and service representatives from across the organisation came together through a series of workshops and meetings to share information on the following themes:

- Leadership and Corporate Commitment
- Participation of Children and Young People
- Empowerment of Children and Young People
- Child Friendly Complaints Procedure
- Training and Awareness Raising
- Improving Practice
- Publishing Child Friendly/Easy Read Information
- Measuring Progress
- Children's Rights Budgeting
- Accountability and Reporting on Children's Rights
- Non-Discrimination/Rights at Risk

This process helped us to understand areas of good practice relating to children's rights, along with areas where improvements were needed to ensure that children and young people can enjoy their rights.

What are we doing well?

The self-assessment highlighted where things were working well within individual service areas and at leadership level. Key strengths identified were:

- Some strong leaders focused on progressing children's rights
- Focus on UNCRC and GIRFEC in *Lothian Strategic Development Framework*
- Individual good practice examples from some services
- GIRFEC embedded in community settings
- Partnership working
- Royal Hospital for Children and Young People child-friendly website
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Early-stage evidence of writing reports in a child-friendly way
- Communicating with children and young people about their care
- Gathering child health data, e.g. Health Visitor Universal Pathway, Immunisations, Breastfeeding
- Child Protection procedures

Alongside understanding where things were working well, we identified things that could be better, gaps in delivery, and opportunities that existed to advance children's rights.

Where do we need to improve?

Analysis on the findings from the self-assessment highlighted eight key themes:

1. Training and awareness raising, Education and Learning
2. Leadership and Governance
3. Policy, Planning, Service Improvement and Learning from Good Practice
4. Language and Communication
5. Clarity and Consistency
6. Impact, Compliance and Reporting
7. Engagement and Participation of Children and Young People
8. Finance and Budgets

Staff spoke about values, ways of working, facilitators, barriers, opportunities, messaging and conflict. Having gathered a large amount of information, it was important that this could be channeled into a meaningful way forward, informed by the children and young people whose rights we aim to progress.



Children and young people's participation

To support our self-assessment, a sample of children and young people across Lothian were supported by trusted adults to share their views. They told us what they know about their rights, including their rights to health and health-care. We learned what is going well for them and where we need to make improvements so that they can fully realise their rights.

Between July - September 2024, we worked with partner organisations to engage with fifty children and young people across Lothian. This approach allowed us to gather their views in multiple ways and across different settings. It was important to us that we met with children in spaces and with people that were familiar to them. Some examples of our engagement work included:

- Talking to children and families in the **Royal Hospital for Children and Young People** - facilitated by **Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity**.
- Community workshop with young people with learning disabilities - facilitated by **Midlothian Learning Disability Team**.
- Visit to **East Lothian Champions Board** for children and young people with experience of care - facilitated by **Who Cares? Scotland**.
- Online questionnaire - facilitated by **NHS Lothian Volunteering Services**.
- Engagement through play - facilitated by **NHS Lothian Play Services**.



Engaging with children in the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People

How children and Young People's Voices shaped our direction

Children and young people told us that they most often learn about their UNCRC rights in school. Other sources included family members, health and social care professionals and third sector staff. Some young people had not received any learning about their UNCRC rights and some parents, including home educators, did not know where to get information about children's rights.

Many children and young people told us about some of the UNCRC Articles that they were familiar with, such as the Right to be listened to and taken seriously (Article 12), the Right to an education (Article 28) and the Right to rest, relax and play (Article 31) and the Right to be as healthy as possible (Article 24). Although they could name some of their rights and were familiar with the UNCRC, the majority of those we spoke to were not sure what enjoyment of their rights, particularly their rights in relation to health, would look like in practice.

Children and young people were clear that they:

- want to know about their health rights and how to claim them
- want to receive information in ways that they can understand

Feedback from the consultation was collated with information gathered from staff during our self-assessment and together these insights informed the development of **NHS Lothian UNCRC Strategic Framework** and **Children's Rights Plan 2025-29**.

The voices of children and young people come through clearly in our Children's Rights Plan and we are taking action to improve two-way communication and feedback on children's UNCRC rights between NHS Lothian and children and young people.

Actions we are working on include:

- Developing a Children's Rights web page to share information about children's rights and the actions we are taking forward.
- Developing a UNCRC Communications Strategy.
- Co-producing Children and Young People's Participation Guidance for NHS Lothian staff.



UNCRC Strategic Framework and Governance

NHS Lothian UNCRC Strategic Framework sets out the principles by which we will work and our priority areas for action in the next reporting period. The principles and priorities were directly informed by the findings of our self-assessment and consultation with children and young people.

Advancing children's UNCRC rights in NHS Lothian is a corporate priority and has senior executive endorsement. The UNCRC is embedded in organisational structures through the following mechanisms:

- Decisions endorsed by the Corporate Management Team
- UNCRC embedded in Lothian Strategic Development Framework
- Oversight provided by the Children and Young People and Maternal Health Programme Board
- Executive leadership from the Director of Public Health
- Local direction and national collaboration driven by the Child Health Commissioner Team
- Modelling, advancing and sharing good practice by the UNCRC Champions Network
- Equality and Human Rights governance
- NHS Board scrutiny of reporting

The principles and priorities set out in our Framework have also been endorsed by the four Local Authorities across Lothian - City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian.

NHS Lothian Children's Rights Plan 2025-29 sets out our framework in a format that children and young people told us is easier for them to understand. The Strategic Framework, Children's Rights Plan, Children's Rights Report, and Animated Video for children and young people are available to view on NHS Lothian website.

<https://org.nhslothian.scot/equality-human-rights/childrens-rights/>

In this report we provide examples of actions that have been taken during this reporting period, alongside work that is in progress. These examples are not an exhaustive list of UNCRC actions across the organisation. We hope they will provide a flavour of steps that we are taking on our journey of progressive realisation of the UNCRC in NHS Lothian.

Within each priority area, we have strived to ensure that improvements will reach all Lothian children and young people and those from outwith Lothian who access our services. This includes identifying actions that will help to advance UNCRC rights for children who are, or have the potential to be, furthest removed from the realisation of their rights. High-level aims in this report and in our Children's Rights Plan 2025-29 are supported by a detailed Implementation Plan that will help us to achieve our goals.

UNCRC Principles

When making decisions that directly or indirectly impact children and young people, we will:

1. be informed by national policy and guidance
2. listen to children and young people
3. use an evidence-based and data-driven approach
4. co-ordinate across people and places
5. use a child friendly complaints process
6. recognise that children's rights are everyone's business
7. translate rights into practice

Priority areas for action

1

Training and awareness raising

2

Communication

3

Listening and responding to children and young people

4

Measuring impact and reporting

You Said, We Did

How children and young people's voices shaped our Children's Rights Plan

 **You said...** *"We want adults to listen to us and take us seriously."*

 **We did:**

We have made listening to children and young people a priority. We are improving the ways you can share your views and making sure adults use what you tell them when making decisions. [Priority 3]

 **You said...** *"Sometimes it's hard to understand what's happening or what our rights are."*

 **We did:**

We promised to explain things more clearly, using child-friendly words, pictures and different formats, so you can understand your care and your rights. [Priority 2]

 **You said...** *"We don't always know how to give feedback or complain if something isn't right."*

 **We did:**

We are making complaints and feedback processes kinder and easier for children and young people, so you feel safe to speak up and get help when you need it. [Priority 3]

 **You said...** *"We don't want to keep repeating our story to lots of different people."*

 **We did:**

We are working better together across services, so information is shared safely and respectfully, and you don't have to explain things over and over again. [Priority 2]

 **You said...** *"We want adults to know about children's rights and how to respect them."*

 **We did:**

We are training healthcare staff to understand children's rights and to use them in everyday work, so children are treated fairly, kindly and with respect. [Priority 1].

 **You said...** *"We want to know if changes actually happen."*

 **We did:**

We will check how well we are doing, report on progress, and keep improving. We will also tell children and young people what has changed because of their views. [Priority 4].

Priority 1: Training and awareness raising

Aims

- Raise awareness and understanding of the UNCRC and its relevance to the organisation across the workforce.
- Empower staff to uphold and progress children's rights, through improved knowledge, skills and confidence. This includes ensuring that all health staff, including independent contractors, can talk about the UNCRC confidently and translate knowledge into practice.
- Ensure that children, young people and their families, who come into contact with health services, are well-informed and supported to realise their rights.

Actions taken

UNCRC: What? When? Why? - with Lothian Association of Youth Clubs

[Advances Article 42; Indirectly advances multiple UNCRC Articles by raising staff awareness, knowledge, skills and confidence to uphold the UNCRC]

NHS Lothian partnered with **Lothian Association of Youth Clubs** to deliver bi-annual half-day 'UNCRC: What? When? Why?' in-person training sessions for staff from NHS Lothian and Third Sector youth organisations. These interactive sessions aim to achieve cross-sector learning about children's rights, with opportunities to build knowledge and skills to support practical application of the UNCRC. Feedback has been positive on the benefits of multiagency learning.

Making children's Human Rights Real in NHS Lothian - with Children's Parliament *[Advances Article 2; Article 12; Article 24; Article 42]*

Advanced training opportunities were delivered through a commissioned programme of interactive in-person and online training with **Children's Parliament**. This training was for staff who had completed the *UNCRC: What? When? Why?* training and/or the *Scottish Government, Introduction to Children's Rights* e-learning module.

Workshops focused on translating the UNCRC into practice. Children's Parliament introduced examples of children's human rights approaches and discussion took place on what NHS Lothian can learn from this.

Activities focused on creative reflection on our children's human rights work to date and building a children's rights movement: What has worked? What is challenging? What more can be done? How can agencies support each other?



'Our treasures' activity

We considered the principles of a children's human rights approach and explored how these principles are embedded in our UNCRC Strategic Framework and Children's Rights Action Plan and are being translated into practice:

- **Embedding** - Putting children's rights at the core of decision making, planning, and the delivery of services
- **Equality and Non-discrimination** - Ensuring that every baby, child and young person has an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential
- **Empowerment** - Building the agency and capacity of children and young people
- **Participation** - Listening to children and young people and taking their views seriously
- **Accountability** - Delivering a proactive culture of responsibility for children's rights

Aligned with our children's rights training programme, a network of staff, identifying as **Children's Rights Champions**, have come together to support the UNCRC incorporation journey. All members of staff joining the network have completed introductory children's rights training, with many having also completed further advanced training.

Through our partnership with **Children's Parliament**, advanced training has included learning about what it means to be an 'Unfeartie' - individuals who are willing to speak up for children, listen to their voices and promote their rights - and a number of NHS Lothian UNCRC Champions have joined Children's Parliament national Unfearties network. This brings opportunities for learning together, raising awareness of children's rights, and driving change.



A group of multi-agency 'Unfearties'

Activity undertaken by NHS Lothian Children's Rights Champions includes:

- Raising awareness, sharing learning and driving change in their teams and services.
- Coming together as a network to learn together, support each other, identify and address challenges, and share good practice.
- Working together to translate the UNCRC Strategic Framework principles and priority areas into actions, informing the UNCRC Implementation Plan.
- Embedding NHS Lothian Children's Rights Plan in service planning and delivery.

NHS Lothian has introduced the **Care About Rights** training and development programme within the **Melville Unit**, a specialist inpatient mental health service for children and young people aged 12 to 18, to strengthen a rights-based approach to care and treatment. Based on the Scottish Human Rights Commission's Care About Rights framework, the programme aims to enhance staff understanding of human rights and support them to apply this learning in everyday clinical practice.

Through participative workshops grounded in principles of psychological safety, staff are encouraged to consider how decisions can best uphold the dignity, autonomy and rights of children and young people while maintaining safe and effective care.



To date, 38 members of staff have completed the training, with feedback indicating high levels of engagement and satisfaction. The Equality and Human Rights team are continuing to roll out the programme across the Melville Unit and plan to provide additional coaching and support to help staff embed rights-based decision making within multidisciplinary team discussions and care planning processes.

While the Care About Rights Programme requires investment of staff time and can be challenging to deliver alongside clinical pressures, it has already had a positive impact on practice. Staff report increased confidence in applying human rights principles to complex situations, helping them identify less restrictive approaches to care and providing reassurance and optimism when working in challenging environments.

NHS Lothian worked with **NHS Education for Scotland and UNCRC Leads from other Health Boards** as part of a short-life working group to consider how UNCRC rights can be progressed for children treated in adult health services. As part of this work, NHS Lothian considered *'how we use data to understand need'*.

The **Child Health Commissioner team** worked with **NHS Lothian Public Health Intelligence**, supported by **Lothian Analytical Services**, to determine where children under the age of 18 years are coming into contact with adult services. Data was produced identifying the number of times that children (under 18 yrs) came into contact with adult services (Accident & Emergency (A&E), In-patient and Out-patient services by services area). Sub-analysis explored the data by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), age-group, length of in-patient stay, A&E waiting time, and ward/clinic specialities. Using data, we are more able to:

- understand where under-18s are accessing adult services, helping to identify priority areas for UNCRC awareness and training
- guide training and engagement, by targeting education and training towards adult services that see the highest numbers of children and young people.

At the time of writing this report, data analysis is ongoing to inform future direction and targeted work. The approach is proving beneficial in understanding areas of need and developing informed approaches. Work in this area is in the early stages, however we have already seen its value for helping staff in adult services to understand why the UNCRC is of importance to them. Staff who joined UNCRC training shared that while initially they could not see their role in advancing children's rights, they left training and workshops with new understanding, commitment and enthusiasm to champion children's rights in their teams.

NHS Lothian benefitted from engagement in this working group by tackling a challenging aspect of UNCRC incorporation alongside other Health Boards and learning from collaborative working.

Future work we have identified that could be taken forward in this area includes:

- exploring clinical-led projects to better understand the experiences of children and young people in adult settings - sequencing this after robust data collection.
- holding workshops for adult services to explore practical rights-based approaches, barriers and good practice.
- increased visibility of children's rights through resources and on-site engagement across hospital locations.
- promoting accessible feedback tools in adult settings to encourage children, young people and families to share experiences of care.

How Priority 1 actions are improving children's rights and reaching children furthest from their rights

Through increased awareness, training and capacity-building across NHS Lothian and partner organisations, staff are becoming better equipped to recognise, respect and uphold children's rights in their everyday practice. By supporting staff to move beyond awareness of the UNCRC and apply children's rights principles in decision-making, care planning, communication and service delivery, these actions are helping to embed a culture where children and young people are listened to, their views are valued, and their rights are systematically considered.

The focus on developing a network of champions, building confidence across both child and adult services, and supporting rights-based practice in specialist settings, helps ensure that children's rights are promoted wherever children access healthcare.

The use of data to identify where children come into contact with adult services, alongside targeted engagement and training, is particularly important in reaching children who may otherwise be less visible within health systems.

By improving staff understanding of inequality, participation and non-discrimination, these actions contribute to better outcomes for children who are furthest from their rights, including children living in poverty, children with disabilities or additional support needs, children experiencing mental ill health, and those receiving care in services not traditionally designed around children's needs. Collectively, this work is helping to create a more equitable, rights-respecting health system that is better able to identify and respond to the needs of all children and young people.



Priority 2: Communication

Aims

- Provide visible, clear and consistent internal and external communication relating to the UNCRC. Shared positive language relating to children's rights will be adopted, recognising the opportunity provided by the UNCRC Act to improve the lives of children, young people and their families.
- Ensure that information and resources of relevance to children, young people and their families is provided in clear and accessible formats, using child-friendly language.
- Strengthen communication channels across services and with partner organisations to share resources, learn from good practice and reduce duplication.

Actions taken

Pan-Lothian UNCRC [Advances Article 2; Article 3; Article 12; Article 13; Article 42]

NHS Lothian partner with the **four Local Authority areas served by NHS Lothian Health Board**, working together to share learning and align children's rights activity. This approach aims to streamline actions, strengthen effective use of resources, avoid duplication, reduce expenditure, and improve equity around children's rights practice for children and young people across Lothian. NHS Lothian chairs bi-monthly meetings of UNCRC Leads across the five organisations and a UNCRC Lead representative from NHS Lothian sits on the Children's Rights Working Groups attached to the four **Children's Services Partnerships** - City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian.

This approach has improved partnership working and, although the group is still developing in terms of role and purpose, opportunities to collaborate on Lothian-wide projects have already emerged. An example of this is a collaborative pan-Lothian project being progressed with **Robert Gordon University**, focused on building positive relationships and understanding between health and social care staff and children, young people and their families [see Priority 3 section of this report for further information about this project].

NHS Lothian is an active partner in the following national groups that support UNCRC incorporation:

- **UNCRC Leads Network** (Chaired by NHS Education for Scotland) - superseded from April 2026 by,
- **UNCRC Health Leads Network** (Scotland-wide network)
- **NHS Promise Network** (Chaired by The Promise Scotland)
- **GIRFEC Learning Network** (Chaired by Scottish Government, Children and Families Directorate)

Engagement with these national networks supports us to embed a joined-up approach to multiple policy areas, underpinned by the realisation of children's human rights. NHS Lothian has benefitted from learning from work being taken forward in other Health Boards and public bodies. We have also been able to contribute to the learning of others in the following ways:

- Panel on "Implementation and accountability after the UNCRC Incorporation Act" at **Observatory of Children's Human Rights Scotland - Research Network on Children's Human Rights** event (Nov 2024).
- Presentation on Taking a Children's Rights Based Approach to Care Provision at **British Society of Paediatric Dentistry Annual Study Day** (June 2025).
- Presentation on Children's Rights Theory Into Practice at **Project Echo - Paediatric Palliative Medicine Education Network** (Oct 2025).
- Presentation on NHS Lothian's approach to integrating Equality Impact Assessments with Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments at **Upholding Children's Rights Across Services - Shared Responsibility - WCYPF Conference** (Nov 2025).
- Facilitation of workshop at **Celebrating Breastfeeding in Scotland Conference** - Hearing the Baby's Voice: Rights-Based Approaches in Breastfeeding (March 2026).

Children's Rights Website (Advances Article 12; Article 13; Article 17; Article 24; Article 42]

The development of a **Children's Rights web page** is underway and due to launch in September 2026. The website will provide information and resources about children's rights for children, young people, families and professionals and will be hosted in the Equality and Human Rights section of NHS Lothian website.

The website will support consistent messaging about children's rights and provide a platform where children, young people, families and professionals can learn about what NHS Lothian are doing to progress children's UNCRC rights. A communications plan will support awareness of the new website.

On Board With Children's Rights - animated video [Advances Article 2; Article 3; Article 6; Article 8; Article 12; Article 13; Article 16; Article 17; Article 24; Article 28; Article 30; Article 31; Article 42]

NHS Lothian considered the best way to fulfil our statutory duty to deliver child-friendly reporting on work that we are progressing to advance children's UNCRC rights. We wanted to ensure that information we share with children and young people is of relevance and interest to them and is shared in ways that are most accessible to them. As part of our self-assessment consultation, we asked children and young people for their views on what a children's rights plan for NHS Lothian should look like.

Feedback from Children and Young People

Language

Children and young people emphasised the importance of using accessible, straightforward language. They wanted information to be written in a way that they could easily read and understand, with shorter sentences and clear explanations. Feedback highlighted the need to avoid overly complex language and ensure that information is suitable for different ages and levels of understanding.

Key messages:

- Use accessible language.
- Keep sentences short and clear.
- Ensure information can be easily read and understood by children and young people.

Accessibility

Participants highlighted the importance of information being easy to access and available to everyone. They felt that resources should be written from a child's perspective, ensuring that the content feels relevant, relatable and inclusive. Accessibility was seen not only in terms of availability but also in creating resources that genuinely reflect children's viewpoints and experiences.

Key messages:

- Information should be visible and accessible to all children and young people.
- Resources should be easy to find and use.
- Content should be written from a child's perspective.

Design

Children and young people strongly valued engaging and visually appealing designs. They wanted resources to be colourful, fun and clearly aimed at children and young people rather than adults. Visual elements such as colourful pictures were seen as important in helping understanding and maintaining interest. They also suggested a range of formats, including films, videos and app-based resources, to make information more engaging and accessible.

Key messages:

- Use colourful, attractive and child-friendly designs.
- Include pictures and visual elements to support understanding.
- Keep layouts clear and simple.
- Consider a range of formats, including videos, films and apps.

Content

Feedback indicated that children and young people want content that is positive, constructive and supportive. They felt information should help children develop, learn and improve, while also being relevant to a wide range of experiences and backgrounds. Inclusivity was identified as a key principle, ensuring that all children and young people can see themselves reflected in the information provided.

Key messages:

- Content should be constructive and support children's development.
- Information should focus on helping children improve and achieve positive outcomes.
- Resources should be inclusive and relevant to diverse experiences.

How feedback from children and young people informed our approach

Informed by this feedback, **NHS Lothian** commissioned **Palindromicals**, an independent animation film and production studio, to co-produce a video on children's rights with Lothian children and young people. The feedback was also used to develop our Children's Rights Plan. Together, the Children's Rights Plan and animated video tell children and young people:

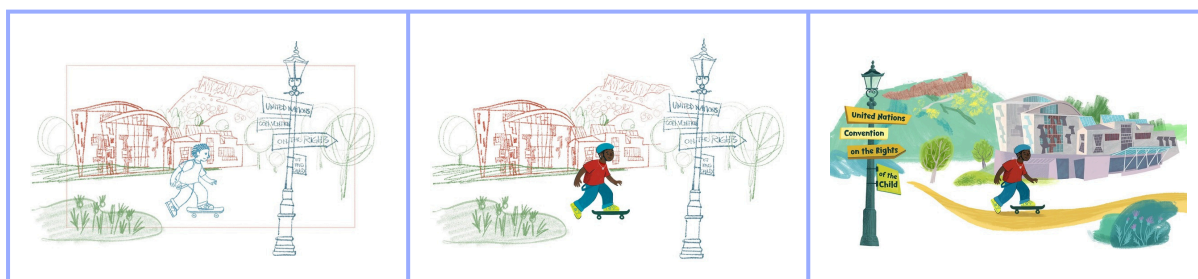
- how children and young people's voices shaped our plan.
- what UNCRC rights mean in the context of health.
- the steps NHS Lothian are taking to advance children's UNCRC rights.
- where they can find more information about their rights and how to claim them.

Feedback from children and young people informed the content of the video and we focused on providing information that they had told us they wanted to hear and filling gaps in knowledge identified in the consultation responses.

Co-producing the video with children and young people

NHS Lothian and **Palindromicals** worked with over 100 children and young people in the age range 5-17 years through a series of surveys and workshops to design the video. Children and young people were involved in the development of both the script and the images, using their voices at each stage of the process to improve the design. They also contributed their voices to the script recording.

This iterative process allowed children and young people, supported by trusted adults, to learn about video production - what is involved, how decisions are made, how images and scripts are developed, how long it takes to produce the final product. They told us that the project was interesting and fun, and that they learned more about their rights from being involved. At the time of writing this report, the final product is eagerly awaited and a video launch is being planned for the children and young people who took part in the production. Following this, the video will be shared widely and will be available to view on the Children's Rights page of NHS Lothian website.





Animation image

Supporting the Deaf Community [Advances Article 2; Article 3; Article 12; Article 17; Article 23; Article 24]

NHS Lothian has strengthened the rights of d/Deaf* children by establishing a **d/Deaf Children and Families Steering Group**, providing a structured forum through which children and families can influence decisions about children's health services.

The group has agreed key governance arrangements, including terms of reference, a safer spaces framework and an action plan to improve access and experiences of healthcare.

Accessibility has also been enhanced through the introduction of British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation on patient information videos on the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP) website. This supports Deaf children's rights to access information, healthcare, and non-discriminatory access to services.

Together, these actions demonstrate progress in promoting the participation, inclusion and wellbeing of d/Deaf children in line with the UNCRC.

**We use the term 'd/Deaf' as the general term to describe people who have acquired hearing loss and use spoken and written language (deaf with a lower case 'd') and people who see themselves as belonging to a cultural and linguistic group who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language (Deaf with a capital 'D').*

How Priority 2 actions are improving children's rights and reaching children furthest from their rights

The actions detailed in this section are helping to create a more accessible, inclusive and rights-respecting approach to communication across NHS Lothian, enabling children, young people and families to better understand their rights and how to realise them. By strengthening communication channels within NHS Lothian, across partner organisations and through national networks, we are improving consistency of messaging and sharing learning that supports the implementation of children's rights in practice.

The co-production of children's rights resources, including the animated video and website, demonstrates a commitment to Article 12 by ensuring that children and young people influence how information about their rights is developed and shared.

Particular attention has been given to accessibility, recognising that some children face additional barriers to receiving information and participating in decisions that affect them. This includes work with D/deaf children and families, the provision of BSL interpretation, and the development of child-friendly resources informed directly by children and young people from a range of backgrounds.

By focusing on accessible formats, inclusive design and clear language, these actions help reach children who are furthest from their rights, including disabled children, younger children, children with communication needs, and those who may be less aware of their rights or how to claim them.

Collectively, this work is supporting greater awareness, participation and empowerment, helping more children and young people to access information, express their views and influence the services they receive.

Priority 3: Listening and responding to children and young people



Drawing of Article 12 by a primary school pupil

Aims

- Develop and strengthen processes to ensure that children and young people's views are taken into account when adults are making decisions that may directly or indirectly affect them. This includes supporting children of all ages from birth up to age eighteen to give their views in a way that is best for them.
- Improve feedback channels so that children and young people know how to share their views on the services we provide and are informed about the actions we have taken.
- Implement the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process Guidance in full to deliver the Model Complaints Handling Procedure in a way that upholds children's rights under the UNCRC.

Actions taken

Involving Young People in Shaping Their Care and Support [Advances Article 12; Article 24]

Young people in the **Melville Unit (CAMHS in-patient) at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP)** were actively involved in recruiting new nursing staff through the ward's weekly *Melville Meeting*. They developed two interview questions focused on how applicants would support young people during emotional distress and ensure their views are heard. These questions were included in formal interviews, encouraging candidates to reflect on empathy, communication and person-centred care. The initiative strengthened young people's participation in decisions affecting their care and demonstrated the value of their voices in shaping service delivery.

'Big School, Wee Worries' [Advances Article 12; Article 24]

A key example of how the **East and Midlothian School Nursing Service** is embedding the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into practice is the development of our Primary 7 transition workshop, "Big School, Wee Worries." This initiative was designed to support children's right to health, wellbeing and participation, recognising that transition to secondary school can be a significant source of anxiety for many young people.

In early 2025, we undertook a small focus group with Primary 7 pupils to better understand their experiences, concerns and priorities regarding the move to high school. Consistent with Article 12 of the UNCRC, which promotes children's right to express their views and have those views taken seriously, the feedback gathered directly informed the development of a pilot workshop.

Using Quality Improvement methodology, the workshop was refined through several Plan–Do–Study–Act (PDSA) cycles. Throughout this process, young people remained central to the design and evaluation of the programme. Their feedback influenced the workshop's name, content, delivery style and overall structure, ensuring it was relevant, engaging and responsive to their needs.

By actively involving children and young people in service design, we have created a transition resource that is informed by lived experience, promotes emotional wellbeing and demonstrates a practical commitment to children's rights in everyday school nursing practice.

Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) services used the **How to Listen to Me Profile** and the **Lundy Model of Participation** to support a young person's school transition.

SPACE

A pupil was getting ready for transition to secondary school placement. This is to a specialist school out with her local community. She is non speaking, has intellectual disability and her development is at a very early stage with no intentional communication. She relies on people who know her well to interpret her behaviours as these are subtle and may be overlooked.

VOICE

We looked at our standard communication profile format which tends to focus on use of appropriate inclusive communication strategies. It doesn't gather enough detail to highlight and describe an individual's behaviours and what they mean. It also didn't share information about how those supporting her should respond. We therefore decided to use the How to Listen to Me profile to gather this information. We took opportunity to work with parents and the school team who knew her really well to gather this information across settings.

AUDIENCE

The How to Listen to me profile was completed ahead of time so that information was available to the team in the new school before transition visits took place. This described each of her observable behaviours, what these might mean and then how these are best responded to.

INFLUENCE

This has been shared as a key document to support transition. It has been shared with new SLT who can promote its use and update this over time. The team supporting her can recognise behaviours and respond to her from the outset. As these behaviours can be subtle and are highly individualised, it may have taken long time to get to know these. They may also have been misinterpreted or not responded to (e.g. increased movement, with repeated flipping head forward – this means discomfort generally associated with her splints. Knowing what this behaviour means is key to highlighting to staff to check splints and adjust if necessary).

Staff can use this information to gather information about how she responds to new environments and activities. They can change her planned timetable activities based on these responses.

Outcome

Listening to and acting on the young person's views led to:

- more effective, personalised support
- more effective transition with better quality information.
- engagement in decisions about their own learning and communication needs.

Listening to the voices of young people in East Lothian [Advances Article 12]

‘Growing and Changing’

East Lothian Partnership and Place team (Public Health and Health Policy) are working with a group of young people (17-19 yrs) who have experience of poverty and inequalities, on matters that are important to them through the *Growing and Changing* campaign. The group gathered over 300 voices towards their *Supportive Person Campaign*. Young people presented their findings and recommendations to Public Health teams and Schools, and plan to write a report for anyone working with children and young people in East Lothian. Young people, supported by Public Health staff, gathered these voices in festival-style events with activities, music, food and fun. Creating events that were for young people, by young people and less about the ‘consultation’ proved to be a huge success in gathering the voices of young people, with over 100 attendees at each event. Going forward, *Growing and Changing* are moving towards a new campaign on young people’s mental health and how they access support, and are planning a fun sport event for young people and staff from across the East Lothian Children’s Partnership.

The Youth Participation Collective

East Lothian Partnership and Place team (Public Health and Health Policy) are working alongside council and third sector colleagues to consider how youth voice is listened to. This work brings various youth participation forums together into one place - *The Youth Participation Collective*. The work contains two strands: a *Young People Forum*, where young people from different participation groups come together to discuss ongoing issues; and a *Staff Forum* bringing together organisations, including those representing marginalised groups and young people who face additional barriers to participation.

A name for the *Young People Forum* will be chosen by young people. The group has met on three occasions this far and has already come up with 5 themes of importance to the young people: *transport, perceptions of young people, school support, youth places and spaces, and safety*. The group have provided vital feedback to the *East Lothian Equally Safe Strategy* (on violence against women and girls) and their perceptions of young people discussions are being shared with those campaigning locally on stigma.

Impact and Learning

A partnership approach between **Public Health and other Children's Services Partnership organisations** ensures that young people have opportunities to share their views, their voices are listened to, and they can meaningfully influence planning and decision-making at a strategic level.

- The *Youth Participation Collective* has an audience with the *Children's Strategic Partnership* every year.
- Lived experience is at the forefront of evidence gathering for the *Local Development Plan*
- Young People's voices help to inform the *Local Outcome Improvement Plan*

Children and Young People Feedback Channels [Advances Article 3; Article 6; Article 12; Article 24]

NHS Lothian is working to improve feedback channels so that children and young people know how to share their views on the services we provide and are informed about the actions we have taken.

Progress

During 2025/26, the **Patient Experience Team** worked in partnership with colleagues at the **Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP)** and **Care Opinion** to deliver an engagement event aimed at raising awareness of feedback opportunities amongst children, young people and families. The event used storytelling, interactive activities and child-friendly resources, including stickers and colouring activities, to encourage participation and support understanding of how feedback can be used to improve services.

The event was well received by children, young people, families and staff, and provided an opportunity to hear directly from children about their experiences of care. Following the event, children and young people continued to share stories through Care Opinion. These stories have been shared with relevant NHS Lothian services to support learning, recognise good practice and identify opportunities for improvement.

Challenges

Children and young people are still less likely than adults to provide direct feedback about their experiences. There is a need to continue developing approaches that encourage participation and make feedback opportunities visible, accessible and meaningful.

Next Steps

The Patient Experience Team will continue to promote Care Opinion and other feedback channels across children's services and build on the learning from the RHCYP engagement event. We will also continue our review of public-facing patient experience information to ensure children, young people and families can easily find information on how to share feedback and understand how their views contribute to service improvement.

Our work to better understand where children come into contact with adult services provides an opportunity for us to expand the reach of this work beyond children's services through a targeted data-driven approach (see Priority 1 section of this report for further information on our work around children in adult services).

Child Friendly Complaints Process [Advances Article 3; Article 6; Article 12; Article 24]

NHS Lothian is working to implement the **SPSO Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process Guidance** in full to deliver the Model Complaints Handling Procedure in a way that upholds children's rights under the UNCRC.

Progress

The **Patient Experience Team** continues to support children, young people and their families to raise concerns, provide feedback and make complaints about NHS Lothian services. We work in line with the NHS Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure and SPSO Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process Guidance, ensuring support is available throughout the process.

Alongside managing complaints and feedback, the team have started reviewing the public-facing Patient Experience webpages to ensure information is accessible, easy to navigate and written in a way that is understandable for a wide range of users, including children and young people. This includes reviewing how people access information about giving feedback, raising concerns and making complaints.

Challenges

Complaints and feedback relating to children's services continue to be received mainly from parents, carers and advocates rather than directly from children and young people. Raising awareness of available feedback and complaints routes and ensuring information is accessible for different ages and communication needs remains an ongoing challenge.

Next Steps

We will continue to review and improve the accessibility of information available through the NHS Lothian website and explore further opportunities to make feedback and complaints processes more visible and accessible to children and young people.

Dispute Avoidance and the Child Friendly Complaints Process [Advances Article 3; Article 5; Article 12; Article 13]

NHS Lothian are working with **Dr Sarah Sivers (Robert Gordon University)** on a time-limited project that considers how to create and/or reinforce conditions in which disputes can be avoided.

Dispute avoidance is not the same as dispute resolution, for which there are a range of legal and quasi-legal mechanisms. Our work aims to provide the groundwork for an environment that seeks to avoid disputes by mitigating the incidence of disagreements that could otherwise escalate to complaints (and to court if not otherwise addressed).

We view this as an important step in the creation of a robust child friendly complaints process, and a mechanism to advance children's rights by building positive relationships and understanding between children, young people, families and health and social care staff.

Drawing on findings from Dr Sivers' research: *"Disagreements about paediatric treatment: an exploration of the causes of conflict between parents and clinicians and pathways to dispute resolution"* (2026 *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 1–21 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09649069.2026.2614857>), the project considers the broader applicability of findings from paediatric care across health and social care services.

Informed by a series of workshops with health and social care staff across Lothian, the following resources are in production for dissemination in Autumn 2026:

- Talking Head videos for health and social care staff, introducing key ways to avoid disputes arising and how they apply to work with children to progress their UNCRC rights.
- Talking Head video for parents and carers to aid understanding of the ways in which children's UNCRC rights can be upheld in parent/carer/staff engagement.
- Talking Head videos for children and young people to help them learn about their rights when engaging with health and social care professionals.
- Training for Trainers resource for health and social care teams and services.

Importantly, the project provides a means of translating published research findings into everyday practice. Work will be undertaken to monitor the uptake and impact of the resources.

How Priority 3 actions are improving children's rights and reaching children furthest from their rights

These actions are strengthening NHS Lothian's ability to listen to, understand and respond to the views of children and young people, ensuring that their voices influence decisions at both individual and strategic levels.

By embedding participation into care planning, service design, recruitment, feedback processes and partnership decision-making, children and young people are increasingly being recognised as active rights-holders rather than passive recipients of services.

Particular effort has been made to create opportunities for participation that are tailored to children's differing needs and circumstances, including supporting non-speaking children to communicate their views, involving children and young people experiencing poverty and inequality in shaping local priorities, and improving accessibility for those who may face barriers to participation.

The focus on strengthening feedback and complaints processes, alongside work to build positive relationships and avoid disputes, helps ensure that children and young people are able to raise concerns, influence change and have their rights respected when decisions affect them.

By seeking out and responding to the views of children who may be less frequently heard, including disabled children, children with complex communication needs, young people experiencing mental ill health, and those facing socio-economic disadvantage, these actions are helping to reduce inequalities in participation and ensure that services better reflect the needs, experiences and rights of all children and young people across Lothian.

Priority 4: Measuring impact and reporting

Aims

- Monitor progress on children's rights. This will involve undertaking assessments of how well children are being protected, including the use of children's rights and wellbeing assessments.
- Report every three years to Scottish Ministers in a stand-alone NHS Lothian report, with the first report submitted as soon as practicable after 31 March 2026.
- Contribute to joint reporting with partner organisations where this is relevant and appropriate regarding multi-disciplinary work to promote and protect children's rights.

Actions taken

Embedding Children's Rights in Decision-Making

NHS Lothian has undertaken a range of actions to strengthen children's rights through the **Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment (ECRIA) process** and wider embedding of children's rights in decision-making. Key work undertaken in this reporting period is detailed below.

Strengthening the ECRIA framework and governance

An audit was undertaken of how the Corporate Management Team (CMT) considers equality and children's rights in decision-making.

Following the audit, the **Equalities and Human Rights team**:

- Developed and published a new [Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment Policy](#).
- Updated CMT submission paper templates.
- Revised ECRIA guidance, templates and website resources.
- Established an annual audit process to monitor the quality and use of ECRIAs.

Reviewing decision-making through a children's rights lense

A CMT Equality and Children's Rights Audit was introduced to assess:

- whether papers considered the need for an ECRIA.
- whether ECRIAs were completed and attached where required.
- whether equality and children's rights issues were appropriately addressed in decision-making.

The audit found an overall positive rating of 65.6% for consideration of equality and children's rights within CMT papers, providing a baseline for future improvement.

Improving the quality of ECRIAs

ECRIA reports were audited against 25 questions based on Equality and Human Rights Commission and Scottish Government children's rights guidance.

Results showed:

- 96% of ECRIA reports achieved a positive rating (green or amber).
- 48% were rated green, demonstrating high-quality, well-evidenced assessments.

This indicates strong compliance with equality and children's rights guidance and provides a baseline measure for the improving the quality of assessments.

UNCRC Strategic Framework

The development of **NHS Lothian UNCRC Strategic Framework** has been instrumental in providing direction to our children's rights work, helping us to focus across the organisation on shared objectives and ways of working. We recognise that full realisation of UNCRC rights for all children and young people who come into contact with our services, either directly or indirectly, will be a long journey, and we are heartened by the steady progress that has been made over the last two years and look forward to continuing the journey throughout the next reporting period.

At the time of writing this report, we lack robust organisational measures of the impact of work to progress children's UNCRC rights on child health outcomes. One of our priorities in the next reporting period is to establish baseline data and outcomes indicators to support these measures.

Informing the development of Key Performance Indicators

NHS Lothian Child Health Commissioner has been working with colleagues from the **University of Edinburgh's Observatory of Children's Human Rights** to explore how meaningful indicators and measures can be developed to support implementation of the UNCRC within health services. This collaborative work seeks to draw on international learning and ensure that future children's rights reporting focuses not only on compliance, but on demonstrating real improvements in the experiences and outcomes of children and young people. The Child Health Commissioner has also been asked to support an ESRC-funded programme of work on children's rights monitoring, helping to shape approaches that are practical, evidence-informed and useful for public bodies in meeting their children's rights duties.

Taking a whole service approach to embedding the UNCRC

Examples are provided from two services who have aligned children's rights action plans in their service area with the UNCRC Strategic Framework principles and priorities. This approach helped the services to identify areas for improvement, aligned with NHS Lothian strategic direction.

Example 1: Speech and Language Therapy Service

What did we do?

During 2025–26, Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy services continued to embed children's rights across clinical practice and service development through a whole-service focus on awareness and training, communication, participation, and impact measurement. Staff awareness of children's rights has been promoted through UNCRC learning, integration of child and family voice within SLT principles of practice and increasing use of rights-based and neuro-affirming approaches in assessment, intervention and decision-making processes.

Progress we made

Progress has been made in embedding children's views within clinical pathways, report templates, communication profiles and assessment processes. Resources including *How to Listen to Me*, Talking Mats, communication profiles and symbol-supported materials have strengthened opportunities for children and young people to participate in decisions affecting them.

Feedback from families is increasingly gathered and discussed through team meetings, quarterly reporting and service development activity, and examples of co-production are emerging within service development projects.

Challenges we faced

Challenges remain in achieving consistency across all teams and settings. While family feedback is increasingly routine, there is variability in how children's views are captured, analysed and used to demonstrate impact. Accessible feedback mechanisms, participation opportunities and governance arrangements require further development to evidence how children's voices influence service decisions and outcomes.

Next steps

Priorities for 2026–29 are to embed a culture of consistent rights-based practice, strengthen co-production, standardise accessible resources and implement robust systems for measuring and reporting the impact of children's participation on service improvement and decision-making.

Example 2: East Lothian Health Visiting Service

What did we do?

During 2025–26, East Lothian Health Visiting services continued to embed children's rights across practice through a focus on staff awareness, communication, participation and governance. UNCRC awareness was promoted through team meetings, supervision, professional development discussions and induction processes, supported by identified UNCRC champions. Children's rights messaging was incorporated into routine contacts with families, health promotion activity, partnership working and service communications. Health Visitors continued to promote participation by observing and responding to the views of babies, children and families during assessments and home visits, while children's perspectives increasingly informed service development and quality improvement activity. Rights-based considerations are also becoming more visible within assessment, planning, documentation and governance processes.

Progress we made

There has been increased staff confidence in discussing and applying children's rights, with greater consideration of children's views within assessments, reviews and care planning.

Children's rights are more visible within documentation, service communications and partnership activity, contributing to improved awareness among staff, families and stakeholders. The service has strengthened its understanding of children's experiences and priorities and there is growing discussion of outcomes for children and young people through governance, reporting and service improvement processes.

Challenges we faced

We face challenges in maintaining consistency across all Health Visiting teams and services. Consistent application of rights-based approaches are affected by competing training priorities, limited protected learning time and variations in staff confidence. Ensuring accessible communication for families with diverse needs, achieving meaningful engagement with underrepresented groups and balancing children's rights activity alongside other service priorities continue to require attention. Further work is also needed to strengthen how the impact of children's rights is measured, evidenced and reported across settings.

Next Steps

Priorities for 2026-29 are to strengthen and expand the network of UNCRC champions, continue embedding children's rights within documentation and assessment processes, and increase the availability of accessible and child-friendly information, including digital resources and materials in different formats and languages. The service will further develop opportunities for participation and co-production, improve how feedback and participation outcomes are shared and used, and strengthen reporting arrangements to demonstrate the impact of children's rights on service delivery and outcomes for children and families.

How Priority 4 actions are improving children's rights and reaching children furthest from their rights

The actions described in this section are strengthening NHS Lothian's ability to demonstrate accountability for children's rights by ensuring that children and young people are considered more systematically in decision-making, service planning, delivery and evaluation. The development of governance, audit and impact assessment processes is helping to embed children's rights across the organisation and move children's rights from policy into practice.

By improving the quality and consistency of Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessments, NHS Lothian is better able to identify potential impacts on children and young people and take steps to address inequalities before decisions are implemented.

The use of audits, reporting mechanisms and service-level self-assessment supports a culture of continuous improvement, enabling services to reflect on progress, identify gaps and share learning.

Importantly, this work creates greater visibility of the experiences and outcomes of children who are most at risk of being overlooked, including children with disabilities, babies and younger children whose views may need to be interpreted through trusted adults, children experiencing poverty, and those facing barriers to participation or access to healthcare.

While recognising that further work is required to develop robust outcome measures, the foundations established during this reporting period place NHS Lothian in a stronger position to evidence impact, monitor progress and ensure that the realisation of children's rights remains a core consideration across all areas of service delivery.

The road ahead

This report is not just about looking back, but also looking forward. Advancing children's rights in NHS Lothian is a work in progress and we will continue to take action, record improvements and monitor impact over time. Our UNCRC Strategic Framework and Children's Rights Plan sets out our direction of travel. We will continue to progress ongoing actions that have been highlighted in this report and will commence new activity to help us reach our goals. Feedback that we receive from this reporting cycle will be used to strengthen our approach and refine our plans.

Detailed below are the outcomes we will work towards and some of the actions we will take in the next reporting period to help us achieve our outcomes.



Children, young people and their families are well-informed and supported to enjoy UNCRC rights

We will:

- Develop a communications plan to raise awareness of the UNCRC and the actions we are progressing.
- Raise the visibility of the UNCRC across physical spaces that children, young people and their families come into.
- Provide information on children's rights through relevant channels, such as the Personal Child Health Record (Red Book).



Staff are empowered to uphold and progress children's rights

We will:

- Continue to deliver introductory-level multi-agency staff training on children's rights with Lothian Association of Youth Clubs and develop an advanced training offer.
- Embed the UNCRC in relevant staff training modules.
- Grow our UNCRC Champions Network to share and model good practice.
- Develop a 7-minute briefing and dissemination plan.
- Deliver a series of Lunch and Learn online sessions to build staff knowledge and skills.
- Develop and maintain our children's rights web and Intranet pages.

- Develop a library of resources for staff to support the practical application of the UNCRC.
- Work with Robert Gordon University to develop Dispute Avoidance training and resources that will support staff to embed relational practice that upholds the UNCRC.
- Work with independent contractors, such as GPs, Dentists, Pharmacy staff, to raise awareness and support practical application of the UNCRC.
- Use a data-driven approach to identify and work with adult services that come into contact with under 18s



Information is clearly communicated and accessible

We will:

- Adopt shared positive language relating to children's rights across the organisation.
- Progress the use of media, such as videos, animation and talking heads, to share information with children, young people and families.
- Develop guidance for staff on producing child-friendly information and resources.
- Progress pan-Lothian approaches through shared actions and resources via the Pan-Lothian UNCRC Leads Group.



Children and young people's views are taken into account in decisions that may affect them

We will:

- Develop participation guidance to ensure that children and young people are meaningfully involved in decisions that affect them.
- Improve opportunities for children and young people to share their views on the services they receive.
- Improve feedback channels to ensure that children and young people know about the actions we have taken based on their feedback.
- Fully implement a Child Friendly Complaints Process and raise awareness with children, young people and families.

-
- Work with Robert Gordon University to develop resources for children and families to help avoid disputes from arising.



Progress is monitored and reported

We will:

- Establish baseline data on UNCRC implementation.
- Develop and pilot outcome indicators to help us monitor the impact of our work.
- Conduct assessments to evidence how well children's rights are being upheld, including the use of Children's Rights Impact Assessments.
- Evidence the progressive realisation of the UNCRC across our UNCRC Strategic Framework priorities.
- Deliver 3-yearly Corporate UNCRC Reporting.
- Develop 3-yearly child-friendly UNCRC reporting based on what children and young people tell us they want to hear.
- Collaborate with partner organisations across the four Lothian local authority areas to ensure consistency and quality of UNCRC reporting.

Conclusion

This report aims to inform the reader of NHS Lothian commitment and strategic direction towards the progressive realisation of children's rights. Sitting alongside strategy, the report demonstrates specific initiatives that are being taken forward to embed UNCRC principles and child-friendly approaches across services.

We consider that by embedding children's rights into planning, governance and decision-making, staff and services will be supported to embed our Strategic Principles and Priorities into everyday practice.

This report has allowed us to reflect on progress and enablers of change, and we will continue to refine our approach based on the evidence we gather as we move forward.

Key Highlights, 2024-26

1. Leadership and Strategic Commitment

NHS Lothian has established strong foundations for advancing children's rights through clear leadership, governance and strategic planning. The development of a UNCRC Strategic Framework, Children's Rights Plan, implementation programme and governance structures has created a coordinated approach to embedding children's rights across the organisation. Significant investment has also been made in workforce development, awareness raising and impact assessment processes to support staff to translate children's rights into everyday practice.

- Established a UNCRC Strategic Framework and Children's Rights Plan with senior executive endorsement and clear governance arrangements.
- Embedded children's rights within organisational planning, decision-making and reporting structures.
- Developed a programme of staff learning, champions network and rights-based practice initiatives to build knowledge, confidence and accountability.
- Strengthened Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessment processes to support evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.

2. Collaborative Partnership Working

Collaboration has been a key enabler of progress throughout NHS Lothian's children's rights journey. By working closely with local authorities, third sector organisations, national networks, academic partners and community groups, NHS Lothian has strengthened learning, shared resources and promoted a more consistent approach to children's rights across Lothian and beyond. This partnership approach has increased capacity, reduced duplication and supported innovative projects that improve outcomes for children and young people.

- Developed a Pan-Lothian approach with four local authorities to align children's rights activity and share learning.
- Worked with third sector and community partners to deliver training, participation activities and co-produced resources.
- Contributed to, and learned from, national UNCRC, GIRFEC and children's rights networks.
- Collaborated with academic and professional partners to develop innovative approaches to participation, communication and dispute avoidance.

3. Meaningful Participation of Children and Young People

Children and young people have been at the centre of shaping NHS Lothian's approach to UNCRC incorporation. Their views informed the self-assessment process, strategic priorities, Children's Rights Plan and communications resources. Across services, increasing emphasis is being placed on creating meaningful opportunities for children and young people to influence decisions about their care, service design and strategic planning. This work is helping to ensure that children's rights are realised through genuine participation, inclusion and accountability.

- Engaged directly with children and young people to identify priorities and inform strategic planning.
- Co-produced child-friendly resources, including the Children's Rights Plan, website content and animated video.
- Increased opportunities for children and young people to influence care planning, service improvement and recruitment processes.
- Strengthened feedback, participation and complaints mechanisms to ensure children and young people's voices are heard, acted upon and reflected in future developments.

Our partners

The progress described in this report would not have been possible without the support of the below partner organisations. We thank them and the many others who are working with us to advance UNCRC rights for children and young people across Lothian.



You can find more information about our work to progress children's rights at <https://org.nhslothian.scot/equality-human-rights/childrens-rights/>