

Stand up for child rights



Please use the contact details inside if you would like a face-to-face or written briefing, presentation, or would like to talk to us about any issue regarding child rights.

If you would like to receive regular updates on child rights, please email us at parliamentaryteam@unicef.org.uk

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www.unicef.org.uk

UNICEF UK Manifesto for Children



2009–10

Children in the UK

We call on all political parties to implement all the recommendations made by the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child published in October 2008¹. Specifically, UNICEF UK calls on all political parties to:

UNICEF is the only organisation working for children and their rights that is specifically mentioned in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Convention states that governments can look to UNICEF for expertise and technical support in issues relating to children. UNICEF also plays a key role in the reporting process to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and helps to ensure that governments implement the recommendations of the Committee.

UNICEF UK's vision is a world in which every child's rights are realised. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the world's greatest promise: a better life for every child. Help us make it happen now.

1. www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GBR.CO.4.pdf

1. Make the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child part of UK law

Although the UK has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention has not been incorporated into UK law, which means that the principles of the Convention are not comprehensively taken into account in all pieces of legislation. We therefore urge all political parties to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into UK law. This would make the Convention directly applicable in UK courts of law.

For more information, email UNCRC@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/uncrc



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2. Listen to children and young people

Every child has the right to be heard. In the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UK Government promised to consider children's views in matters that affect them. We call on all political parties to fulfil every child's right to be heard by ensuring they listen to children and young people and develop mechanisms to ensure that their voices are heard in policy-making processes.

For more information, email listen@unicef.org.uk
www.tagd.org.uk

3. End child poverty by 2020

The UK Government, like all governments that have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, has promised to take measures to the maximum extent of available resources to ensure that all children enjoy an adequate standard of living. Today 4 million² children are living in poverty in the UK. We urge all political parties to make the necessary financial investment to end child poverty by 2020. This commitment is far cheaper than the cost of not ending child poverty, which the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has estimated to be £25 billion a year³.

For more information, email ecp@unicef.org.uk

www.unicef.org.uk/endchildpoverty

2. Households below average income (HBAI) 2007–08. HBAI figures can be downloaded from www.dwp.gov.uk

3. www.jrf.org.uk/publications/estimating-costs-child-poverty



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4. Roll out the Rights Respecting Schools Award to all schools

Governments that have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have promised to ensure the Convention is known to both adults and children. There are now more than 700 schools registered with UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award, reaching more than 200,000 children in nursery, infant, junior and secondary schools across the UK. This Award is for schools that successfully place the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of their ethos and curriculum. Emerging evidence shows that there is strong support from children, who willingly adopt the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as a practical guide to living. Schools working with the Award experience a reduction in bullying, exclusions and absences. They report improvements in teachers' morale and strong parental support⁴. We call on all parties to support the widespread roll out of the Award scheme and secure ongoing funding to enable more Local Authorities to work in partnership with UNICEF UK thereby extending the benefits to more children and adults.

For more information, email listen@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa

4. www.unicef.org.uk/campaigns/publications/pdf/RRSbriefing.pdf

5. Protect victims of child trafficking and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Every child has the same basic human rights. Trafficked and asylum-seeking children share the rights of all children as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, they are particularly vulnerable to abuse. We therefore encourage all political parties to implement fully the international standards on trafficked and asylum-seeking children, including the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

For more information, email UNCRC@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/trafficking



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6. Improve sexual health services and resources for young people

We welcome the Government's announcement that Sex and Relationships Education will be made a compulsory part of the curriculum, but more is needed to stop the rising rate of sexually transmitted infections in the UK. Young people (age 16–24) are the age group most at risk of being diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection⁵. Every child has the right to education, information and services that could protect them from harm. In order to address this, UNICEF UK calls on all political parties to help deliver more youth-friendly sexual health services and improve awareness of the importance of safer sex amongst young people in the UK.

For more information, email sexualhealth@unicef.org.uk
www.tagd.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/prevention

5. Sexually transmitted infections in young people (age 16–24) account for 65 per cent of all chlamydia, 56 per cent of genital warts and 50 per cent of gonorrhoea infections diagnosed across the UK, HIV and STI Department, Health Protection Agency, July 2008.

7. Improve breastfeeding rates

Every child has the right to be healthy. Nine out of ten women who stop breastfeeding their child before six weeks say that they would have liked to have breastfed for longer⁶. To ensure women get the support they need to breastfeed, the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative works with the National Health Service (NHS) to deliver a high standard of care for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Breastfeeding has a key role to play in tackling health inequalities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires the UK Government to ensure that everyone is made aware of this. We call on all political parties to support the implementation of the Baby Friendly Initiative in all hospitals and community health facilities and to tackle the aggressive promotion of breast-milk substitutes by full implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

For more information, email breastfeeding@unicef.org.uk
www.babyfriendly.org.uk

6. Bolling, K., et al., *Infant Feeding Survey 2005*, Department of Health.



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We call on all political parties to promote integrated policies that support the rights of children and to demonstrate strong leadership to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Specifically, we call on political parties to:

8. Keep our promise to deliver aid

Poverty will not be eradicated without an immediate and major increase in the delivery of international aid. Wealthier countries, including the UK, have promised to provide 0.7 per cent of their national income in aid and they must now make good on their commitment to this and other promises. We therefore call on all political parties to respect a binding timetable to reach 0.7 per cent by 2013.

For more information, email parliamentaryteam@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/issues



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9. Prioritise HIV prevention for young people

In the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments promised to fulfil every child's right to education, information, services and a supportive environment to protect them from harm. It is crucial that the UK leads international efforts to prioritise HIV prevention in developing countries – with a particular focus on young people, who are disproportionately affected by the epidemic, accounting for almost half of all new infections.

For more information, email hiv@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/prevention

10. Take urgent action to reduce the impact of climate change on children

Children in developing countries are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and yet least responsible for the problem. The next 12 months, focused around the UN Climate Change Conference at Copenhagen in December 2009, are critical for climate change agreements that will define the future for children. Significant funding is required to meet the shortfall in support for developing countries to adapt to the impact of climate change, recognising the particular vulnerability of children. We urge action by all political parties to ensure that the UK's emissions reduction target for 2020 is met entirely through genuine emission cuts rather than through any carbon trading.

For more information, email climate@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/climatechange



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11. Champion water and sanitation as key development issues

UNICEF UK welcomed the launch of the water and sanitation Global Framework for Action by the UK and Dutch Governments in 2008. However, more needs to be done to make sure this framework succeeds. Every child has the right to clean water and good sanitation. Basic sanitation is still one of the most neglected of all the Millennium Development Goals. The lack of sanitation is one of the principal causes of child illness and death in developing countries. As part of the framework, governments of developing country are drawing up national plans to combat the crisis. We call on all political parties to support the global framework process and help ensure that no credible national plan fails through lack of finance.

For more information, email waterandsanitation@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/wash

12. Support mothers and children, reduce child and maternal mortality

UNICEF UK is working to make sure that the UK Government contributes its fair share of the additional finance needed to ensure universal coverage of the basic services as promised by Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 – to reduce the mortality rate of children under the age of 5 and to improve maternal health. The UK should also support national child-focused social protection systems that can bring tangible benefits to vulnerable families, especially when they are comprehensive, sustainable and enable access to health care and education. We call on all parties to help realise women and children's rights to life, health care and social security in their international development strategies.

For more information, email parliamentaryteam@unicef.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/survival



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