

## **Rights of the Child UK (ROCK) Making the UNCRC part of UK law**

### **What is ROCK?**

The Rights of the Child UK coalition, also called ROCK, is an alliance of charities and individuals across the UK that wants to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child part of the law in the UK. It was set up in 2008. Members of ROCK include CRAE, The Children's Society, the NSPCC and Save the Children. There is a full list of our member organisations below.

There are also lots of individual ROCK members - lawyers, children's rights experts and activists, including children and young people. Membership of the coalition is open to anyone who supports our aim of making the UNCRC part of UK law.

### **How do I join ROCK?**

If you would like to join ROCK, or just want to find out more, contact Katy Swaine ([kswaine@crae.org.uk](mailto:kswaine@crae.org.uk); tel - 020 7278 8222 extension 30)

### **What is happening now?**

ROCK is campaigning to show people why making the UNCRC part of the law in the UK will help all children and young people to be able to enjoy all of their rights, all of the time. The **Children's Rights Bill** was introduced in Parliament on 19 November 2009 by Baroness Joan Walmsley to try to make the UNCRC part of the law in the UK. ROCK worked with Baroness Walmsley to produce the Bill and is helping her to gather support for the Bill in Parliament. It is not likely that the Bill will become law this year, but we hope that it will provide an opportunity for constructive debate in Parliament about the future of children's rights in the UK. The Bill is expected to be debated in the House of Lords in early March 2010.

### **How can I support the Children's Rights Bill?**

We need children and young people to get behind the ROCK campaign **NOW** by writing to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, asking him to support the Children's Rights Bill and help make the UNCRC a reality for children in the UK. You can find out how to write to the Minister and get some ideas about what you could say in your letter, from the ROCK web page. You can also read more below about the UNCRC and why we think it needs to be made part of UK law. It's important that your letter is written in your own words, to help the Minister understand why children's rights are important to you.

Find out more and download the template letter here:

<http://www.crae.org.uk/protecting/uk-law.html>

### **What is the UNCRC?**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty (agreement) that gives over 40 important human rights to children and young people (all those under the age of 18). These rights include the right to be treated equally, the right to have a say, the right to be protected from harm, the right to an education, the right to privacy, and the right to receive good health care.

The UK Government ratified (agreed to follow) the UNCRC in 1991 – this means it took on the responsibility to protect and respect children’s human rights under international law.

### **What’s the situation now?**

At the moment, the UNCRC is not part of the law in the UK. This means that while children’s rights have to be followed – because they are part of international law – children and young people cannot take a case to court in the UK if their rights under the UNCRC are ignored. This can mean that children’s human rights are not taken seriously.

### **Why does the UNCRC need to become part of the law?**

By agreeing to follow the UNCRC, the Government agreed to make sure all the laws and policies that affect children take account of children’s rights, and respect and protect children’s rights. But the Government does not think that the UNCRC needs to become part of the law in the UK. It says that children’s human rights are already part of many laws and policies affecting children.

ROCK thinks that the Government’s approach means that many rights belonging to children and young people are not fully covered by existing laws, and that as a result, children are not able to take action to enforce their rights. It also means that some children do not have the same protection as others when it comes to being able to enjoy their rights, including children with disabilities, young refugees and asylum seekers, and children in trouble with the law.

If the UNCRC was part of UK law, it would mean that children could rely on it in court to make sure they are able to enjoy all of their rights. It would also mean that all public services would have to take children’s rights seriously. Incorporating the UNCRC into law would be one step towards children’s rights being widely known and celebrated (rather than, at times, feared and misunderstood).

It would also help to make sure all adults working with children and young people know about the UNCRC and the importance of making sure children and young people can enjoy all of their rights.

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## **Rights of the Child UK (ROCK)**

*For the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into UK law*

**Our members:** Article 12 in Scotland, the British Humanist Association, the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE), The Children's Society, the Fatherhood Institute, the Howard League for Penal Reform, the National Youth Advocacy Service, the National Youth Agency, NCB, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Save the Children UK, Scope, the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights, Sefton Voices, Shelter Children's Legal Service, Unicef UK, Voice and Who cares? Scotland. Details of individual coalition members are available upon request.

***The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views of all members.***