Fostering an effective learning environment

"Training and consistency are going to be key moving forward." Professional Panel member

"Time and space are needed for workers to learn about this and get it right, otherwise it's just an exercise. Too many people think if they speak to children once they have addressed rights, but it is about embedding children's rights into your everyday practice. It's a complete change in attitude that is needed." Professional Panel member

What helps to create an effective learning environment?

Careful planning:

- Understanding work already done across Scotland and incorporate any learnings.
- Identifying areas across existing training where UNCRC could be mainstreamed.
- Testing materials in advance.

Systems and leadership:

- Leadership must commit to training, including the importance of supporting the workforce to use a children's human rights approach.
- Identifying training champions and children's rights advocates across Scotland.
- Training elected members and improving wider governance structures.
- Funding models for delivery of training and learning.
- Highlighting the benefits of implementing UNCRC as a motivation to engage with training.

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Making it practical:

- Ensuring peer learning, reflective practice, and partnership runs through the training programme.

- Linking to performance management, including to individual workplans, and learning and development.

- Organising learning events.

- Ensuring materials include relevant day-to-day examples and activities.

- Providing bespoke support to different departments and organisations to ensure it responds to current programmes of work.

Planning to share and embed learning:

- Extending training to community groups and organisations such as community councils and local planning boards.

- Creating additional support networks of practice and follow up discussion groups.

- After training, review, learn, and test again.

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What can be strengthened to mitigate barriers?

Careful planning:

- Reflecting on your own practice. Don't assume you have all the knowledge. Bring it back to children and young people to see what they think of your work.

- Proactively using alternative training approaches and formats to respond to capacity and time constraints.

- Defining the scope of the training audience with a maximalist reach. Children and young people think everyone should be trained.

- Understanding what motivations encourage your learners to complete their training and decide whether making it mandatory will be helpful.

- Celebrating the diversity of knowledge, understanding, reactions to, and preferences towards training on children's rights.

- Evaluating the effectiveness and costs of different training methods including in person, blended, and e-Learning to reach different audiences and outcomes.

- Deciding how often the training will need to be refreshed.

- Acknowledging that the training might re-traumatise or vicariously traumatise workers if they have experienced issues with rights concerns, or potential or actual breaches, and plan a trauma-informed training programme.

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Systems and leadership:

- Prioritising time for senior leadership to engage in training, learning and planning.

- Clearly explaining what the training will cover to respond to any wariness about uncertain legislative interpretation.

Making it practical:

- Starting by understanding learners' knowledge levels and work.

- Avoiding focusing on common misconceptions or on 'mythbusting'. This can reinforce, rather than correct, misunderstandings. Tackle issues as they arise by giving learners a new way to think that moves them past their misconception.

Planning to share and embed learning:

- Collaborating and sharing resources with different sectors and agencies to embed the training.

- Planning for follow-up sessions and bespoke next steps to ensure learning isn't lost.

- Evaluating the effectiveness of training and focusing on where changes need to be made for greater impact.

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Reflection question: What is already working to create positive learning environments about children's rights, human rights or equality related topics in your organisation?

Useful resources about creating learning environments:

Open Educational Practices have created a free four hour online course on supporting collective learning in workplace and community settings through the Open University's Open Learn Create platform.

Charted Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) report on creating learning cultures and assessing the evidence.

Education Scotland's national model of professional learning.