The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an internationally binding agreement on the rights of children. It was formally agreed by the UN General Assembly in 1989. The rights are all seen as necessary for the development and dignity of the child. Most countries in the world have ratified it (made it official locally), including Ireland in 1992 and the UK in 1991. This means that the Irish and UK governments are committed to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of children. The United States of America is the only country that has not ratified the convention.

Economic, social and cultural rights are a cluster of articles within the convention. They include the right to an adequate standard of living (food, clothing and housing), the right to the highest standard of health, the right to social security, and the right to education.

Activity 1: My Rights as a Child

Aim
Examine children’s rights and identify how they are realised locally.

Resources
- Worksheet 1: Children’s Rights Cards
- Worksheet 2: Diamond Ranking Template

Time
30 minutes

Step 1
Show the UN logo on the board and ask the children to suggest what it represents. The world map represents all the people and the countries of the world. The North Pole is at the centre. We are used to seeing the North Pole at the top of the world map and Europe at the centre. Countries in other parts of the world put themselves at the centre. Discuss this different perspective. The wreath in the UN logo is made of crossed branches of the olive tree, representing peace. White and blue are the official colours of the UN.

Step 2
Ask the class what children need and what they should be able to do in order to live a healthy and happy life. Make a class list. Explain that the UN also made a list. It is called the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Step 3
Split the class into groups of three or four. Photocopy Worksheet 1: Children’s Rights Cards and give a set to each group. Discuss these rights as a class and identify how many you included on the class list.
Step 4
Display Worksheet
2: Diamond Ranking
Template for the class.
Ask each group to
organise the rights cards
using this template.
What rights do they think
are the most important?
Each group should share
their answers with the whole class.

Note: Please make sure to explain that all rights
are equally important and, therefore, there are no
correct or incorrect answers.

Step 5
Covid-19 has changed the way we learn, play and
communicate with our friends. Schools, parks and
shops were closed and we spent most of our time
indoors. Discuss which rights were affected by
Covid-19 in your local area; for example, the right
to education and the right to play.

Extension Activity
Malala Yousafzai from Pakistan came to public
attention by writing for the BBC about life under
the Taliban. She spoke up for girls’ right to
education in her community. She was just eleven
years old. Research one person who has fought
for justice and fairness for others. Include their
name, age and what they fought for.

Activity 2: The People Behind Our Rights
Many people are necessary to guarantee our
rights. We couldn’t exercise the right to education
without schools and teachers. We couldn’t
exercise the right to healthcare without hospitals
and nurses.

Step 1
Print a copy of Worksheet 3: The People Behind
Our Rights for each child. Ask them to complete
the table.

Differentiation: The table can be completed in
pairs, groups or as a whole class.

Step 2
Ask the children to draw a simple map of their
community and include some of the places listed
on Worksheet 3: The People Behind Our Rights.

Give each child a copy of Worksheet 1: Children’s
Rights Cards and ask them to stick the cards onto
the relevant areas of their community map.

Step 3
Governments must prevent people from violating
the human rights of others. They do this in many
ways; for example, by prosecuting people who
break the law or by educating people about their
rights and the importance of respecting the human
rights of others. Ask the class these questions:

• Do governments sometimes fail to protect our
  rights?
• Are some people in Ireland being denied their
  rights? For example, the right to shelter.
Worksheet 1: Children’s Rights Cards

Every child has the right to food.

Every child has the right to a home.

Every child has the right to clean water.

Every child has the right to play and rest.

Every child has the right to education.

Every child has the right to be safe.

Every child has the right to be listened to.

Every child has the right to healthcare.

Every child has the right to protection from war.
Worksheet 2: Diamond Ranking Template

Most important

Least important
Worksheet 3: The People Behind Our Rights
Complete the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Right</th>
<th>People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospital</td>
<td>Right to healthcare</td>
<td>Doctors, nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trócaire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church/mosque/synagogue/gurdwara</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports, dance and gymnastics clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scouts/Girl Guides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police service/gardai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>