

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The New Simplified Reporting Procedure

Introduction

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN Committee) will next examine the UK in 2022. The UN Committee will assess how well the UK is implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Its last review of the UK was in 2016. The examination presents a key opportunity for civil society to raise important issues of concern affecting children's rights with the UK Government and the UN Committee and to highlight where action is needed, as well as outline where progress has been made.

The next review will be done under the new Simplified Reporting Procedure (SRP) meaning it will be slightly different to previous examinations. This briefing provides information on the new process, what it entails and how civil society organisations can get involved.

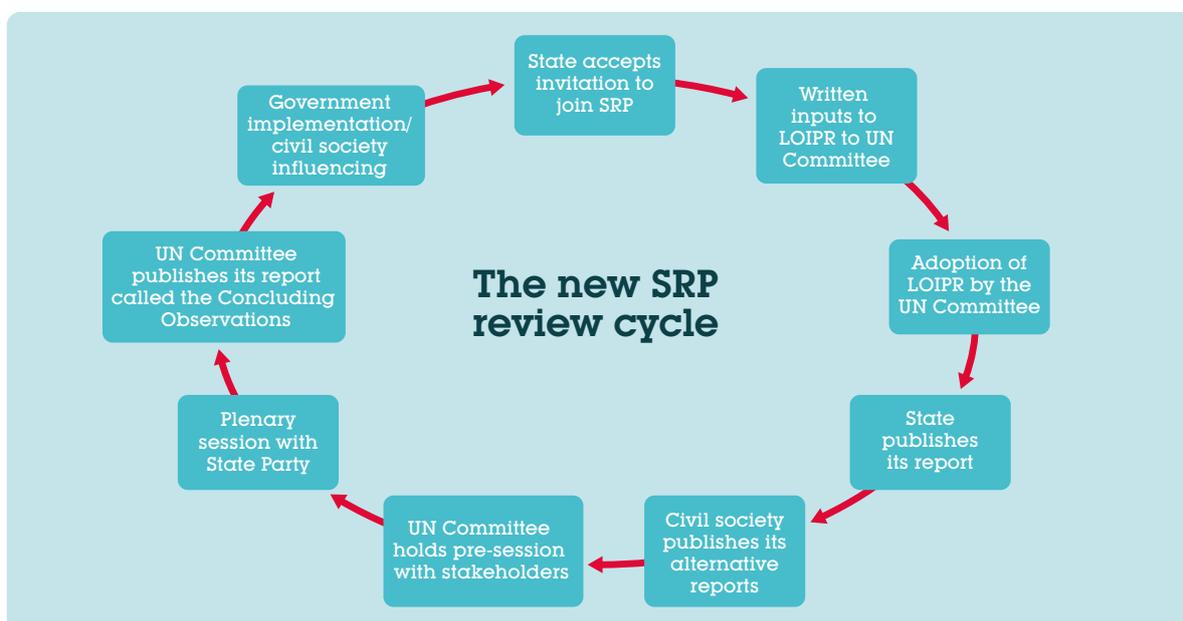
What is the Simplified Reporting Procedure?

The new SRP aims to streamline the reporting process for human rights treaties and make them more effective by reducing the reporting burden on

States.¹ It helps States prepare more focused reports on key priority areas to ensure they can better follow-up on the recommendations issued by UN Human Rights Committees by having more specific issues and fewer recommendations to implement.

The UK opted in to the SRP for the CRC examination so will engage in the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR) procedure. This means that the UN Committee will adopt a public list of limited issues for the examination, based on a document review and including reports by civil society organisations, UN agencies, children, academics, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and Children's Commissioners. The UK will then reply to this List of Issues with its own State Report that it will present to the UN Committee.

The rest of the reporting procedure is similar to the previous one. However, it is important to note that in this cycle there are two key influencing points for civil society – a submission to influence the LOIPR and a civil society alternative report. There is also only two months between the submission of the State Report and the alternative report deadline so preparation has to begin well before this.



¹ The SRP was announced in UN General Assembly Resolution 68/268 of April 2014

Why engage?

The review of the UK by the UN Committee is a key opportunity to:

- Raise concerns and make recommendations to the Government about key issues affecting children's rights and push for change in the run up to the examination
- Increase awareness and understanding of children's rights issues, among civil society, the Government, parliamentarians, the media and the general public
- Work in partnership with others to draw attention and speak out on issues that are harming children and highlight what needs to change
- Engage children themselves in the review process, and support them to speak out on the issues they are facing and outline what action the Government needs to take
- Ensure the Government is effectively held to account on its child rights obligations and receives a strong set of recommendations.

How to engage

There are some key stages in the review process which civil society organisations can engage in and influence. CRAE's role is to lead this process on behalf of civil society.

Identification of the list of issues: these will form the basis of the UK Government's State Report and the issues that the UN Committee will focus on.

- Civil society organisations can make written submissions on emerging trends and key issues and suggest questions that the Committee can raise with the Government and include in their List of Issues (but no recommendations are suggested at this stage).
- Organisations can identify up to 30 issues consisting of background paragraphs followed by suggested questions.
- CRAE will lead and coordinate this process on behalf of the children's sector through written and oral evidence sessions that you can contribute to, see below.
- The maximum word count for a joint submission is 10,000 words (but there is no word limit for submissions from children).

Civil society alternative report:

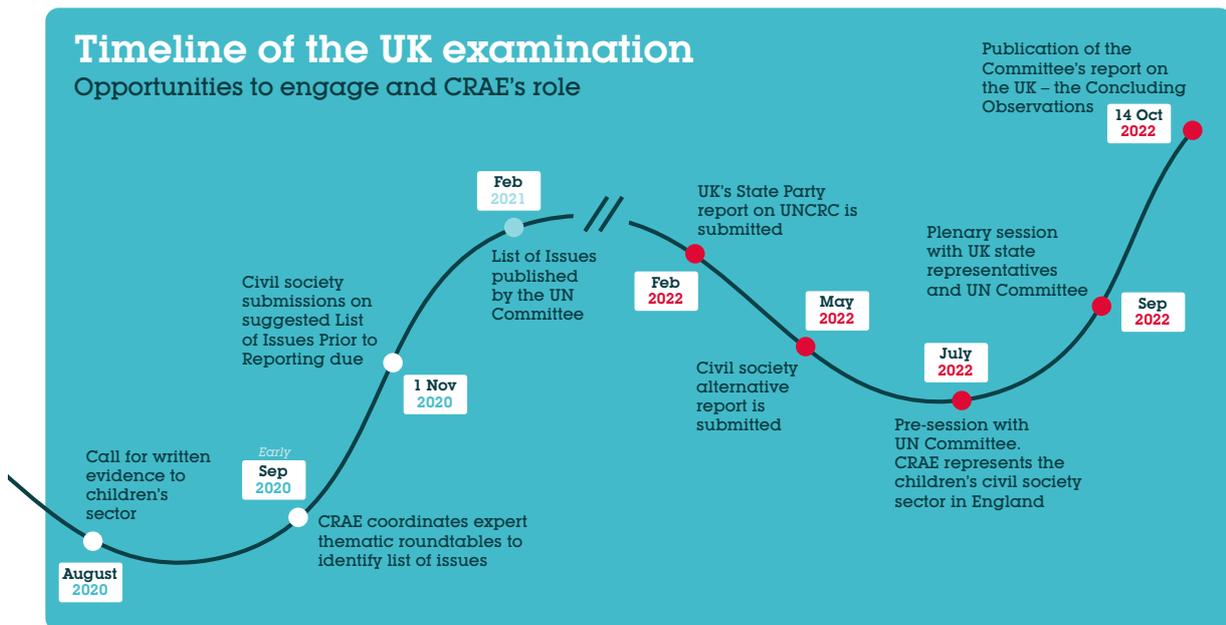
- As before, the children's sector can publish a civil society alternative report, based on the List of Issues already identified. This is an opportunity to comment on the Government's report, highlight gaps and key issues and make recommendations.
- The word limit is 20,000 words for a comprehensive, joint report, or 6,000 for a thematic report (there is no word limit for children's submissions, and these can be in multiple formats, see below).

Discussion with the UN Committee:

- The UN Committee will invite children's organisations and other stakeholders who have submitted evidence to participate in the pre-session working group with members of the UN Committee to have an in-depth discussion on their submissions. CRAE has always been invited to attend. This is a key opportunity to highlight key issues you want Committee members to cover in the plenary session. A separate meeting with children and UN Committee members also takes place although children can also take part in the meeting with other stakeholders.
- Anyone can also observe (but not intervene) in the UN Committee's dialogue with the State Party during the plenary session, either in Geneva or through a webcast.
- Members of the UN Committee may also visit the State Party in the run up to the examination. CRAE will help coordinate this visit which is an opportunity for Committee members to meet with key stakeholders and children, as well as visit key institutions such as children's homes or Young Offender Institutions.

Engagement with UK Government:

- CRAE and other stakeholders also have the opportunity to engage with the UK Government's response by commenting on draft reports or attending consultation events to inform the State report. The CRC Stakeholder Action Group which CRAE co-chairs with the Department for Education will also be a key forum for engagement between the State and civil society.



Engaging children in the review process

Child participation is encouraged throughout the review. There are several different ways in which children can engage in the process. They can:

- Share information on the process and consult with other children, and prepare written submissions/reports, either on their own or supported by an organisation (CRAE has always done this in the past)
- Request a meeting between children and the UN Committee during the pre-session (either in person or through video conferencing)
- Prepare an oral presentation for the pre-session and respond to questions (this can also be done by video-conferencing)
- Attend the country plenary session of the UN Committee
- Take part in, or lead, follow-up activities once the UN Committee has issued its report

Involving children in the CRC reporting process

CRAE supported a steering group of 22 children aged 7-18 from a diverse range of backgrounds to plan and run the project *See it, Say it, Change it* to engage in the CRC reporting process in 2015. We engaged nearly 1,000 children through focus groups and an online survey targeting those most likely to not have their rights respected across England. The key child rights issues and recommendations were compiled in a report which was sent to the Committee.²

The steering group was supported to participate in both a children's meeting with the UN committee and the formal pre-session alongside adults from civil society, the UK Children's Commissioners, children's rights alliances and the NHRIs where they presented a short statement and answered the Committee's questions. One of the child participants said: *"This has been a once in a lifetime opportunity."*

Eight months later, recommendations in the Concluding Observations reflected the main issues raised by children in their report and meetings with the UN Committee. The project evolved into *Change It!* which supported a group of children to campaign on the implementation of one of the recommendations from the Concluding Observations for the next four years.

2. See it, Say it, Change it: Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015) CRAE http://www.crae.org.uk/media/119341/crae_seeit-sayit-changeit_web.pdf

Importance of following-up after the examination

The UN Committee's report provides the framework for civil society to hold the Government to account for its follow-up and implementation of the Concluding Observations. There are several ways in which the children's sector can use the Concluding Observations to push for change:

- Take part in the CRC Stakeholder Action Group, co-chaired by the Department for Education and CRAE
- Work with MPs and Peers to use the Concluding Observations and call on Government ministers to set out how they will be implemented
- Share the Concluding Observations with other organisations, activists and supporters
- Use the Concluding Observations in policy, public affairs, media work and campaigning

About CRAE

The Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) is part of the charity Just for Kids Law. We work with over 100 organisations and individuals to promote children's rights – making us one of the biggest children's rights coalitions in the world.

We believe that human rights are a powerful tool in making life better for children. We fight for children's rights by listening to what they say, carrying out research to understand what children are going through and using the law to challenge those who violate children's rights. We campaign for the people in power to change things for children and we empower children and those who care about children to push for the changes that they want to see.



Children's Rights Alliance for England

Part of Just for Kids Law

The Baring Foundation

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Find out more

For more information on CRC reporting visit Child Rights Connect's website:

<https://cocreporting.childrightsconnect.org>

Using children's rights approaches in policy and public affairs: Best practice paper

http://www.crae.org.uk/media/128097/CRAE_BEST-PRACTICE-D.pdf

How parliamentarians and civil servants can use the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

http://www.crae.org.uk/media/128597/crae_brief-for-parliamentarians-d.pdf

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