

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman: Child friendly complaints-handling principles – Consultation

The Scottish Social Services Council is the regulator for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce in Scotland. Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

We protect the public by registering social service workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting their professional development. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct we can investigate and take action.

We:

- publish the national codes of practice for people working in social services and their employers
- register people working in social services and make sure they adhere to the SSSC Codes of Practice
- promote and regulate the learning and development of the social service workforce
- are the national lead for workforce development and planning for social services in Scotland
- publish data and official statistics on the social work, social care and children and young people workforce.

Principle 1 – For everyone under 18

1. How well do you think we have explained this principle? The principle is:

- a. Very clear**
- b. Mostly clear**
- c. Partly clear**
- d. Not at all clear**

2. Is there anything you think would help explain this principle better?

We have no comments to add.

Principle 2 – Focused on children's best interests

3. How well do you think we have explained this principle? The principle is:

- a. Very clear**
- b. Mostly clear**
- c. Partly clear**
- d. Not at all clear**

4. Is there anything you think would help explain this principle better?

We have no comments to add.

Principle 3 – Trusting and inclusive

5. How well do you think we have explained this principle? The principle is:

- a. Very clear**
- b. Mostly clear**
- c. Partly clear**
- d. Not at all clear**

6. Is there anything you think would help explain this principle better?

We support the substance of this principle, but we believe the first bullet point may benefit from being reworded in line with plain language guidelines to allow its meaning to be made clearer.

Principle 4 – Centred on children's voices

7. How well do you think we have explained this principle? The principle is:

- a. Very clear**
- b. Mostly clear**
- c. Partly clear**
- d. Not at all clear**

8. Is there anything you think would help explain this principle better?

We have no comments to add.

Principle 5 – Kind and supportive

9. How well do you think we have explained this principle? The principle is:

- a. Very clear**

- b. Mostly clear**
- c. Partly clear**
- d. Not at all clear**

10. Is there anything you think would help explain this principle better?

We support the substance of this principle, but we believe the first bullet point may benefit from being reworded in line with plain language guidelines to allow its meaning to be made clearer. We believe the current wording may be misinterpreted as meaning that children might not be offered additional support on the basis of their having made a complaint as this would amount to being treated differently. We are aware that this is not the intention of this principle and believe making this clear would strengthen the link between this principle and the principles of children's rights even further.

Principle 6 – Confidential

11. How well do you think we have explained this principle? The principle is:

- a. Very clear**
- b. Mostly clear**
- c. Partly clear**
- d. Not at all clear**

12. Is there anything you think would help explain this principle better?

We support the substance of this principle but wonder whether raising a child protection concern is the only situation under which information shared by a child should be shared. If there were a situation in which a child's complaint revealed information that suggested someone else, a carer for example, was at risk or if a direct threat were made by the child against someone else, it would be reasonable to expect that information to be shared. Perhaps this should be reflected in the principle.

Principle 7 – Educational about rights

13. How well do you think we have explained this principle? The principle is:

- a. Very clear**
- b. Mostly clear**
- c. Partly clear**
- d. Not at all clear**

14. Is there anything you think would help explain this principle better?

We have no comments to add.

Any other comments, observations or suggestions

15. Please share any other comments you have below.

We welcome the strong focus these principles have on children's rights. We believe that actively linking the child friendly complaints handling principles to specific articles of the UNCRC is a clever way of demonstrating the connection between these principles and children's rights and should help promote children's rights literacy for those using these principles.

Scottish Social Services Council

March 2024