

CHILDREN'S LEGAL RIGHTS



All children and young people have rights. These rights are things that make sure young people are safe, happy and healthy. These include the right to:-

- An education.
- Protection from violence.
- Have good healthcare.
- A childhood and to rest and play.
- Not be forced to work. No child labour!
- Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Be heard and treated fairly.
- Not to be neglected, abused or mistreated.
- Develop personalities.



Who is a child?

In England and Wales, a child is someone who has not yet reached their 18th Birthday.

Age of Criminal Responsibility for Children.

The age of criminal responsibility for children in England and Wales is 10 years old. This means children under 10 can't be arrested or charged with a crime but can receive other punishments.

Children between the ages of 10-17 can be arrested and taken to court and convicted if they commit a crime.



Section 43 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

The Youth Justice statistics for 2017-2018 state 26,700 children were arrested, cautioned or sentenced.

AGE OF CONSENT

The age of consent to have legal sex in the UK, is 16 years old. These laws are to protect children from child sexual exploitation and abuse, rather than to prosecute those who participate in a mutual agreeing, sexual relationship.

To further help protect children, the law states that anyone under the age of 13 cannot legally provide consent for sex. This means that anyone participating in sexual activity with a person who is 12 and under is breaking the law.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 states it is illegal to: -

- take, show or pass around indecent photographs of a child. This is also known as 'sexting'

-pay or arrange sexual services of a child.

-for a person in a position of trust (a teacher or care worker, for example) to engage in any type of sexual activity with a child who is under 18 or still in their care.



Childline 0800 1111.

Children's Wishes

Most of the time children have the right to make decisions for themselves, as long as they have a good understanding of their choices.

Example- A doctor can prescribe contraceptive advice and treatment to under 16's provided they understand the issues involved and it is in the best interest of the patient without their parent's involvement.

A child can also leave their parents if it is in his or her best interest only.

Example- A young man wanted to change gender and live as a woman, but his parents did not support his decision. He went to live with foster carers and wished to prevent his parents from having access to his school or medical documents. The law must respect the decisions the young man had made, and he was entitled to his privacy.

When are the wishes of a child refused?

Authorities sometimes have to act in the best interest of a child and this may sometimes conflict with the child's wishes.

Example- A 15-year-old girl refused treatment at a psychiatric hospital as she suffered from a mental illness. Her parents wanted her to receive treatment and the doctors agreed it was in her best interest. As she did not understand the impact on her decision her wishes were refused.

Most of the time it is the child's decision how they want to live their life!

YOUR VOICE- YOUR CHOICE!