

Module 1: Why do children's rights matter in public services - and where do they come from?

Module overview and learning objectives

Public administration plays a central role in how children's rights are realised in everyday life. Many public decisions affect children, even when they are not the primary focus.

This module introduces the foundations of children's human rights, explains where these rights come from, and why they matter for public servants. It highlights the importance of rights-based approaches.

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Describe what children's rights are, where they come from, and how they apply to children
- Recognise how children's rights improve public decision-making and service delivery
- Explain why children's rights matter in public administration

Module 2: Children's rights landscape in Ireland

Module overview and learning objectives

International child rights standards set important expectations, but it is Irish law and policy that shape how children's rights are realised in everyday public administration.

This module introduces the key constitutional, legislative, and policy foundations that underpin children's rights in Ireland. It explains how these frameworks apply across public bodies and why they are relevant to staff working in policy development, service delivery, regulation, inspection, and support roles.

The module also recognises the real-world challenges public servants face, including time pressures, limited resources, risk management, and competing interests and priorities, and shows how a rights-based approach can help guide practical, well-founded decisions in complex situations.

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Identify the main legal and policy frameworks protecting children's rights in Ireland
- Understand how children's rights are reflected and protected in the Constitution, legislation, and national strategies
- Recognise the relevance of these frameworks to all public servants

Module 3: The role of public servants in respecting, protecting and fulfilling children's rights

Module overview and learning objectives

Children interact with the State primarily through public services and public decisions. This module explains what it means to recognise children as rights-holders and clarifies the specific responsibilities of public servants and public bodies in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling those rights in daily work.

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Understand children as rights-holders under the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Explain the State's duties to respect, protect, and fulfil children's rights
- Recognise how these duties apply to everyday public sector roles and decisions across the public sector

Module 4: What are substantive and procedural rights?

Module overview and learning objectives

This module introduces the substantive and procedural rights of children and explains why they matter for staff working across the public sector.

The module focuses on outcomes and lived experience rather than legal technicalities, and prepares learners for more in-depth training on specific rights, duties, and accountability mechanisms in later modules.

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Explain the difference between substantive and procedural rights
- Understand how these rights are relevant to public servants and decision-making
- Reflect on how their own role can support or undermine the realisation of children's rights in practice

Module 5: Children's rights in practice

Module overview and learning objectives:

Children's rights are realised, or undermined, through everyday public sector decisions. While Ireland has strong laws, policies, and frameworks, these are only effective if they are applied routinely, systematically, and consistently in practice.

This module focuses on how children's rights are implemented in real-world public administration and shows how rights are translated into concrete responsibilities and opportunities for public servants.

Through practical scenarios and case studies, the module supports public servants to apply a rights-based approach when decisions are complex, resources are constrained, and trade-offs are unavoidable.

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

- Explain what the general measures of implementation are and why they matter
- Understand how children's rights are implemented through systems, processes, and everyday decisions
- Recognise that children's rights are a whole-of-government responsibility
- Use a rights-based approaches to guide fair, transparent, and proportionate choices
- Recognise your own role in respecting, protecting, and fulfilling children's rights in practice

Module 6: Applying rights to improve your work

Module overview and learning objectives

This module supports public servants to apply children's rights in everyday decision-making, from early policy development to frontline service delivery. It emphasises early consultation, the use of Child Rights Impact Assessments, and the practical application of the four child rights principles.

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Understand how a rights-based approach applies across public administration
- Create an enabling environment to ensure access through rights through policies and strategies
- Recognise the importance of engaging children in policy and service design
- Use CRIAs to assess impacts on children's rights
- Apply the four child rights principles in daily work, across different sectors
- Identify practical actions that improve outcomes for children

Module 7: Your commitments & further resources

Module overview

Core takeaways

Final learning assessment

My commitments