



Children's Parliament Investigates How Professionals Make Rights Real

Sandy's Story

Workshop Delivery Guide

Introduction

This resource is an activity designed to introduce children's rights. It can be used to help children and adults explore together how human rights are experienced in everyday life.

Aims of the activity

This activity will:

- Help children to understand where and how children's rights can be infringed or upheld.
- Introduce the ideas that underpin the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Help adults to understand how their behaviours, words and actions can have an impact on children's sense of human dignity and whether they are healthy, happy and safe.

About the activity

Sandy's Story works well as a way to introduce children's rights in a session where adults and children are working together. It provides space for both groups to talk about the issues that children might encounter and specifically what adults can and should do to address them. Children's Parliament has been using different versions of this story for a long time and we have always found it helpful as a way of starting conversations about how rights are experienced (or not experienced) in a real-life context.

This version of the story has been adapted to have a specific focus on the role of adults who work with children or who interact with children in the course of their work. We have imagined a situation where adults are not doing their best for children - there are lots of examples of bad practice to be found - as a way of ensuring the activity becomes solution-focussed; we would encourage you to discuss examples of good practice from

your own experience. The story is not intended to be representative of the typical experience of children in Scotland and it is not our intention to portray any professions in a bad light. You may well find that the story prompts children to volunteer their own experiences and it is important that they're allowed to do so if they wish. It is equally important that they don't feel obliged to.

Running the activity

The basic outline of this activity:

1. Preparation.
2. Tell the story.
3. Through discussion, support the children to reflect on and to suggest possible solutions to the issues that Sandy has experienced.
4. Reimagine the story with solutions included.
5. Consider your own context – how might the lessons learned apply to where you are?



Preparation

This short description of how to prepare and deliver a session is true for any activity based on a Children's Parliament approach.

Before the session begins, make sure there has been time to explain to the adults involved what the expectations are for working with children.

Adults should be open to listening to and learning from children and they should be mindful of the ways they act – what they do, what they say, how they say it, and the way they inhabit the space.

It is important that children are not made to feel small or unimportant – we do not shout; we speak in terms that everyone in the room can understand; and we sit together, on the same level, preferably in a circle, so that it is clear that we all have equal importance.

Before reading through the story, it is worth highlighting to both children and adults that they should be listening out for times when something happens to Sandy that has a negative impact on him – the things that prevent him from feeling healthy, happy, or safe, or that make him feel like he's not being treated with human dignity.

Tell the story

Read the whole story together (all parts in one go). It is important that the children have the full context.

Part One

Sandy is 8 years old and lives with his mum, his two older brothers and his younger sister. Every day he has to walk his sister to school because his older brothers' school is in the opposite direction and his mum has to go to work early – she's asked her boss to change shifts but they won't let her.

This particular morning – a cold, dark day in December – Sandy oversleeps and can't find anything to eat in the kitchen cupboards so sets off without any breakfast and a rumbling stomach. He and his sister get the bus to school because it's a couple of miles away so they have to make sure they're at the bus stop in time. This morning they have to run but they get there just as the bus is pulling in. Unfortunately, however, the bus drives over a puddle, spraying water up Sandy's trouser legs. No time to worry about that now, though. Sandy and his sister jump onto the bus.

Part Two

Sandy has to search through the front pocket in his bag to find their bus pass and it takes a moment to find it. The bus driver is getting impatient.

"Look have you got it or not?" he snaps, "get on with it. I've not got all day."

Sandy locates the pass and shows it, the driver stares hard at Sandy and then looks away without saying another word. Sandy trudges to find a seat with his sister. It's rush hour so the seats are all taken by people on their way to work. One person stands so Sandy's sister can sit, but no one else moves and Sandy has to stand – holding on to the hand rail as he tries to brush some of the dirty puddle water off his trousers. At school, Sandy and his sister arrive just in time for the bell and head to where their classes meet in the playground.

Part Three

"Sandy!" he hears a voice shout, "How on earth did your uniform get in that state already?"

Sandy turns and sees the Deputy Headteacher striding towards him, an angry look on their face.

"Go and get changed into your PE kit right now!"

Sandy tries to explain that he's only got shorts, not joggers, and it's cold - but he gets cut off.

"No arguing. Go!"

Sandy's a little cold in class in his PE shorts, but he enjoys being at school and gets on with his lessons cheerfully enough. The work distracts him from the stressful morning he has been having. But there's a child on his table who keeps talking and when Sandy tries to tell them to be quiet the teacher comes over.

Part Four

"Right, what's going on here? Who was that talking? You've got work to do."

None of the children say anything. Sandy wants to tell the truth, but he doesn't want to get anyone else into trouble.

"Well it must have been all of you then if nobody wants to tell me what's going on," their teacher continues: "You can all spend some of your break time finishing your work."

By the end of the school day, Sandy is thoroughly fed up. He collects his sister from her class and sets off home, scuffing his shoes grumpily along the pavement as he walks.

As they turn the corner onto the street with their bus stop, a police car slows down and pulls up alongside them. The window on the passenger side rolls down and a police officer stares sternly out at them.

"What're you up to?" says the officer.

"We're going home," Sandy replies.

"What's your name and address?" the officer asks.

Sandy doesn't know why he's being asked this and doesn't really want to tell them, but he's also scared of getting in trouble with the police so he gives his name and address. The police officer writes it down in a notebook, rolls the window back up, and the car drives off without them saying another word. Sandy spends the rest of his journey home thinking about why they stopped, what they needed his name and address for, and wondering if he was going to get into trouble.

Sandy finally gets home, feeling rather tired. The house is cold and so to keep warm until his mother comes home, he and his sister get into bed and watch TV, feeling a bit hungry.

Support the children to reflect on and to suggest possible solutions to the issues that Sandy has experienced

Part by part, support the children to identify the problems that Sandy has encountered. Give the children some space to identify issues. If needed, you can use the following prompts to keep the conversations going.

- When would it be helpful for Sandy to have an adult with him?
- When do you think an adult could explain things more clearly?
- How would it make you feel if (refer to a point in the story when an adult is rude, disrespectful or dismissive)?
- What could an adult do to check if Sandy was okay?
- How would an adult know if Sandy needed help?

Allow the children to draw their own conclusions about what the issues are and then ask them what they think the adults should do differently in each situation. The emphasis should be on adults changing their behaviours, rather than Sandy having to do anything differently.

Suggestion

Depending on the size of your group and the amount of time you have, you may wish to form smaller groups. Give each group a part of the story and ask them to identify the problems that Sandy has encountered and come up with possible solutions.

When setting up groups, try to make sure that children are not outnumbered by adults and that no child is on their own in a group.

Reimagine the story with those solutions included

There are lots of different ways that the story can be retold with the solutions included, and you'll need to decide which way works best depending on the space, resources and time available. The only thing that is really important is that you have changed the way that the adults in the story act so that Sandy's rights are now being respected.

Suggestion

You might rehearse and act out the story, you might ask each group to create a comic strip of their part of the story, or you might work together as a group to rewrite the story as a written text.

Consider your own context – how might the lessons learned apply to where you are?

To wrap up the session, it is useful to reflect as a group on the lessons learned and how much they might apply to your own context. Using your own and the children's experiences to reflect on the issues and the solutions that you've identified together.

Did something similar happen at home, at school or in the community? What is the story? Now you have gone through Sandy's story together, can you spot when children's human rights are not being respected, protected or fulfilled? What can be changed in real life so children's human rights can be upheld?

During this conversation, it is important that nobody feels obliged to share anything. Be mindful that children might find it uncomfortable to bring things up which may be critical of adults. Anything the children bring up should be considered thoughtfully and respectfully by the adults. Reassure the children that they would not 'get into trouble' for raising a real-life example that they weren't happy about.

