

# The F-Words in Childhood Disability: A Rights-Based Values Statement for Children, Families and Service Providers

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## Background

The paper *“The F-Words in Childhood Disability: I swear this is how we should think”* transforms the domains of the WHO’s International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) into ideas that are fun and easy for children and young people, families and service providers to remember and use (see the “F-Words” in the Methods). A collaboration of researchers, clinicians and parents has presented these ideas widely since the paper’s publication, reaching a diverse, worldwide audience.

The significance of the ICF is well known amongst clinicians, but not so much by parents, children and young people. By using a rights-based approach to promote the value of using the ICF (via the ‘F-Words’), we can assist parents and their children to feel more confident when expressing their needs, goals and expectations of services.

Reinforcing the ‘F-Words’ with the **UN Conventions: Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** illustrates how powerful these ideas are when health, wellbeing and human rights converge. The UN Conventions promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, and reinforce the use of the ICF as a tool for ensuring quality of life standards are met. We propose that this combination will help to promote equality of individuals with disabilities in all societies.

Neither the ICF nor human rights influences are commonly visible during interactions between children with disabilities and their families, and their clinicians. Children, young people and their families are central to the decision-making process, **so how can we make the ICF and human rights more visible and accessible** to a wide range of people?

## Methods

- We propose that by using these ‘F-Words’ in a rights-based way, we can take a novel, empowering approach to talk about what really matters to the child/young person and their family.
- Here are **examples** of rights that could be associated with each F-Word (many other rights may overlap):

### FUTURE

This is covered in ALL aspects of the UNCRC and the UNCRPD

#### FAMILY

Article 5 (UNCRC)  
Parental guidance

#### FUN

Article 31 (UNCRC)  
Leisure, play and culture

#### FITNESS

Article 30 (UNCRPD)  
Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

#### FUNCTION

Article 9 (UNCRPD)  
Accessibility

#### FRIENDS

Article 15 (UNCRC)  
Freedom of association

## Aim

By simplifying the WHO’s ICF into ‘F-Words’: Fun, Fitness, Function, Family, Friends, Future, and combining the ICF with UN Conventions\*, our aim is to encourage and support families and clinicians to use a rights-based approach to therapeutic interventions, whilst boosting the drive for cultural change within society.

## Results

One outcome of these collaborations has been an **‘F-Words Agreement’**. This statement of values can be personalised to the individual child/family whilst incorporating the rights of the child.

This informal ‘contract’ between children/young people and adults involved in their care focuses on the **values** underpinning interventions, namely:

*The right to choose what is*

*FUN.....*

*The importance of listening to*

*FAMILIES.....*

*Respecting the way ‘stuff’ is*

*done (FUNCTION).....*

### F-WORDS AGREEMENT

By \_\_\_\_\_ age \_\_\_\_\_



© Please consider these things when we work together ©  
*have the right*

**FUNCTION** – I ~~want~~ to **do** stuff! It may not matter if I don’t do it like everyone else!.....

**FAMILY** – They know me best and I **trust** them to do what’s best for me.  
**L**isten to them. **T**alk to them. **H**ear them. **R**espect them.....  
*has the right*

**FITNESS** – **E**veryone ~~needs~~ to stay fit and healthy and I am no different. I might need to use different ways of getting fit and staying fit and need help to do this.....

**FUN** – **W**hatever floats my boat!!.....

**FRIENDS** – to **m**eeet and get to know, have **f**un with, to **l**earn with, to **g**row old with.....

**FUTURE** – The Future Is **N**ow – Tomorrow is what I make of **t**oday. I don’t want **o**pportunities to pass me by. Help me **a**chieve what I can today.

Thank you



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## Conclusion

- The ideas in this poster have already empowered many parents to express their endorsement of this approach to improving equality for children & young people with disabilities and their families.
- We welcome the opportunity to reach more parents, and to develop collaborative projects with colleagues who want to use the F-Words Agreement and would be willing to share both their individual adaptation of the Agreement and assess its impact on children and families. We invite people to contact us (details below) if they are interested in using this Agreement and a simple data gathering form to collect information about its use.

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**The F-Words in Childhood Disability: I Swear this is how we should think. Rosenbaum PL & Gorter JW. Child: Care, Health and Development. 2012. Jul;38(4):457-63.**

\*UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) UNICEF Factsheet [http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf); UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>