

Children's Rights in Northern Ireland, 2004: Young People's Version

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NICCY

northern ireland commissioner
for children and young people

in association with



Queen's University
Belfast



A boy not getting a say in a
Conversation.

Young Person's Report:

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Research Commissioned by the
NI Commissioner for Children and
Young People (NICCY)

Research Team

Kilkelly, U., Kilpatrick, R., Lundy, L.,
Moore, L., Scraton, P., Davey, C.,
Dwyer, C. and McAlister, S.

Thank You

The research team at Queen's University Belfast and the Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People (NICCY) would like to thank all of the children and young people who helped with this study. Without you talking to us, we would not know as much as we do now about the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

We would also like to thank all the adults, parents, schools, youth projects and children's agencies that helped us.

INTRODUCTION

In 1991 the UK government, along with many other countries, signed up to a document called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). By doing this, they have promised to protect and promote the rights of all children in Northern Ireland. In order to make sure that they are keeping these promises, the government has to report to a Committee (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child) every five years telling them what they have done to make sure that children's rights are protected. If the Committee finds any areas where not enough is being done to protect and promote children's rights they will ask the government to do more on these and report back to them again.

As our government signed up to the CRC, this means that all children in Northern Ireland have rights. There are 54 'Articles' in CRC that state what children's rights are and how governments and adults working with children and young people should make sure that children's rights are part of their work. Shortened versions of some of these can be found in the back of this report in Notes 1 and some places where children can find out more about their rights can be found in Notes 2.

In order to help protect and promote children's rights in Northern Ireland, it was decided that there should be a Commissioner for Children and Young People. Nigel Williams is the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People. His job is to work with a team of people in NICCY (Northern Ireland Commission for Children and Young People) to make children and adults aware of children's rights and to work on issues where there might not be enough work being done. NICCY's job is to protect and promote the rights of all children in Northern Ireland and to work in their best interests.

When Nigel and his team at NICCY started their jobs, they felt they needed more information on children's rights in Northern Ireland. So, they asked us to carry out a large study for them. We have given NICCY the full report discussing all of the points we talk about here in more detail. If they want to, NICCY can now use some of this information to try to make things better for children and young people or they might decide to focus on some of these things. The report we have given to NICCY is a huge document of over 200 pages and it contains a lot of detailed information and legal language. This is why we have made this shorter version of that report which we hope will be useful for children and young people. It will explain how we went about carrying out this study and it will outline some the key areas where children's rights in Northern Ireland are being ignored, or which need to be worked on.

Throughout the report we will highlight things children and young people told us in their own words and use some of the pictures they drew for us. We have not used the real name of anyone in writing this report. Anything that children or young people told us has been put in a different writing style so as it stands out.

SECTION:

one

**GENERAL MEASURES OF
IMPLEMENTATION**

GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

By 'implementation' we mean putting things into practice. This involved looking at some of the problems in putting all of the rights in the CRC into everyday practice and the work that needs to be done to make sure this is done better.

Lots of the people we spoke to, especially those who work with children and young people, told us that there were problems in making sure that children's rights are understood and seen as important when working with and for children. A number of suggestions were made about how this could be done better. From talking to all these different people and looking at other studies, we think:

- The CRC should be included in the laws of Northern Ireland.
- Measures should be put in place to allow regular checks to make sure that children's rights are met. NICCY and others should push for a special person or a group of people in government to work specifically on children's issues (e.g. a Children's Minister).
- More needs to be done to make sure that everyone, including children and young people themselves, are more aware of the rights of children. Also, everyone who works with children and young people should have special training to help them to understand the rights of children.

As one person who works in the legal profession (law) said:

"In looking at children's rights it is not enough to look at the children, you have to look at those who are dealing with the children and that they understand what the rights are ... Training is a key element, judges, lawyers, social workers, doctors, need to be trained in this ... That is the key to children's rights"

- There should be one central place in Northern Ireland - like NICCY - where children and young people can go to get information on their rights. Everyone whose job it is to give information to children and young people should make sure that it is written in a way that makes it easy to understand.

Most of the children and young people we spoke to did not know about CRC or that they had rights. Some did know that they had rights but did not know all of their rights or where to get information on their rights that they could understand. One young man (aged 16) who was at risk of becoming homeless said that part of the reason why some young people did not understand their rights or the information they were given was because of the language used:

"you'd need to have an understanding of law, there's a lot of terms in it"

These examples show that it is very important that children have information about their rights and that this information is written in a way that is easy to understand.

- It can be difficult for children and young people to get independent and private advice and support. It is also very difficult for children to make complaints as these are often set up in a way that is hard to understand or where the people are hard to find or difficult to approach. So, we think there needs to be more of these services and that it should be easier for children and young people to make complaints and have something done to solve their problems.

- There should be up-to-date information available on lots of areas of children's lives and on all children living in Northern Ireland. Every year there should also be study carried out to make sure that children are enjoying all of their rights. People in power should have to do something about it.
- Children should be more involved in decisions that affect them and have their views taken into account. They should be listened to about decisions made with concern them by parents, teachers and those in government.

The most frequent thing children and young people told us was that they had no say in things that affected them and that often when they were asked for their view, that it was ignored anyway. Children wanted to have more of a say in personal decisions (like how to spend their pocket money), family decisions (like moving home), school decisions (like what subjects they did) and local decisions (like what play/leisure facilities were available in their communities). We will talk about these in more detail in the other sections of the report but these are some examples of why children thought that it was important to have a say and to be listened to:

"I know we're just kids but we live in this world too. And if we don't say anything about it, who will?" (Girl, aged 10)

A young girl (aged 12) from the travelling community also told us why it was important for adults to listen to children:

"In case they get bullied and the adults say "No go away" and the children never get a chance to tell the adult that they got bullied or something is happening".

From this study, it was clear to see that children and young people have a lot to say about things which affect them and that they want adults to listen to them. NICCY could help by encouraging schools, communities and young people themselves to set up school councils (which pupils sit on), youth councils (in local communities) and maybe also youth councils in the Northern Ireland Assembly (so as the views of children and young people are included in political decisions).

These are some of the things that children and young people would like to have more of a say in:



SECTION:

two

**FAMILY LIFE AND
ALTERNATIVE CARE**

FAMILY LIFE AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

Children live in all different types of families, they can live with one parent or two parents, they can live with a relative like an aunt or a grandmother or an older brother or sister or a friend of the family who they know. Some children also live in families that they are not related to (this is called foster care), other children live in adopted families and other children live in homes with lots of other children and adults who look after them (this is called residential care). A small number of children also live in what is called 'secure accommodation', these are special units/homes for children who are at risk of harm, they live here with other children and adults who look after them but they do not have as much freedom as most other children, this is for their own protection.

This section looks at family life in all of these different settings and highlights areas where children's rights might not be fully respected and makes suggestions on how this might be made better. The main issues/priorities which need more work here are:

- There needs to be more advice and support for parents. This is most needed when children are very young. There also needs to be better funding (more money) for family support, childcare and out-of-school projects (e.g. playgroups and after schools clubs).

A family policy would mean supporting all families, especially those who live in poor areas or areas where they might be a lot of crime. Positive parenting would guide parents on things like ways to deal with children rather than hitting/smacking them, help with child care if parents work and letting parents know where they can get other support and advice if they have a problem.

It might also include training and guidance on listening to children and involving children in family decisions which affect them. Lots of children and young people we spoke to felt that they had no say in the home. Sometimes this was to do with personal decisions like what time to go to bed, what time to come in or how to spend their pocket money. Sometimes children felt that adults did not listen to them because they were young or that parents put too much pressure on them:

"I think parents shout too much and I think they put too much pressure on us. I know they try to do their best but sometimes they look after us too much and don't give us our freedom. They're always worrying. I think children should do what they want but learn from their mistakes" (Boy, aged 13).

"Sometimes parents don't try to see things from your point of view. They believe because they are older and more mature that they are right which could lead to disagreements instead of compromises" (Girl, aged 15).

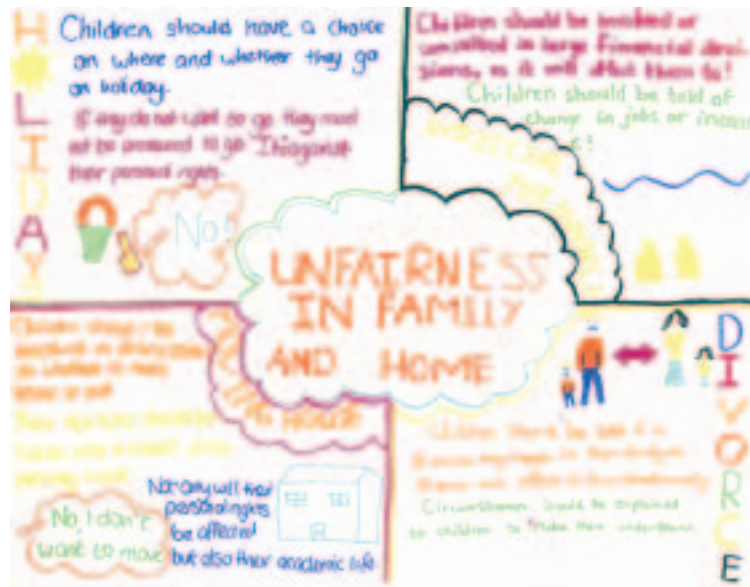
"Sometimes I feel that because I am the youngest so much is expected of me. For example, I have to be as smart as my brother and as good at drama as my sister is" (Girl, aged 11).

Other times children and young people thought that they should have more of a say in bigger family decisions like moving house, choosing family holidays, being included in decisions when parents divorce or separate and being told about deaths in the family and allowed to attend funerals.

These are two posters designed by young people showing all the different ways that they thought their rights were not represented or respected in the family home and the types of things they wanted more of a say in. Below each poster we have also included some of the things that children and young people told us in their stories.



"I love writing in school because that's the only time can really write what I feel and I once kept a diary but I was betrayed when someone intruded on it. So I scrapped that idea. I think if I got more chances to write I could say what I feel more" (Girl, aged 11).



"Kids are not asked if they want to move house, they are just told. Children have no say in where they move to. Children have no say in how the house is wallpapered and which colour" (Boy, aged 15).

- There needs to be more training with families and those working with families and children about children's rights and protecting children. Different agencies working with children and parents should work together.
- More needs to be done to make sure that there are enough social workers and that these social workers stay in their jobs. There also needs to be more people trained to work with children who have special needs such as those who have mental health problems.

Many people who work with children told us that often have a lot of work to do and not enough time to do it because there are not enough trained staff. This affects the work that they can do and often means that they cannot do as much as they would like to. This is what one child care professional (someone who works with children to protect them from harm) said about these workers:

“They are overloaded with work from the start. They don’t get a chance to learn and expand their skills”.

- There has been some work done on trying to do away with parents hitting/smacking children (physical punishment) but more work still needs to be done.
- There are already lots of laws and policies in place to make sure that children are protected from harm (e.g. abuse) but more could be done here to make sure that all agencies are measuring and looking at harm and risk to children in the same way.
- When children have to go to court, especially in cases where their parents break up, they need to be asked what they want and their views must be listened to. If possible parents should get help to work through problems when breaking up so as they and their children do not have to go through the courts.

Here are some examples of what children told us about divorce and separation:

“When my parents split up I decided to stay with my mum and see my dad at the weekends. Other children should be able to decide what they want to do” (Girl, aged 11).

“My family is fine. If they decide to split up children should decide who they stay with” (Girl, aged 11).

- Some children, for all types of reasons, cannot be looked after by their families and so they often have to go into alternative care (this is explained at the beginning of this section). Many studies have found that kinship fostering (a child living with and being cared for by a family member or a friend of the family) is best for children, so we should try to make sure that this happens more often when a child cannot live with their own mum and/or dad.
- There are some problems with the types of residential care (children’s homes) available for children in Northern Ireland. This means that sometimes these places cannot meet the needs of children as they need very special care and staff are not trained in this. Also, sometimes children do not get much of a say in how these homes are run and sometimes all different groups of children and young people are put together in the same place and this can cause all sorts of problems. Even though there is a lot of new work being done here it might not happen for some time so we need to make sure that the problems there are at the minute are not forgotten about.
- For children living in secure accommodation (this is explained at the beginning of this section), we need to make sure that all their rights are upheld and there is concern that this might not happen all of the time. There is also some concern that because there are not very many places in Northern Ireland to help these children that they might stay in secure accommodation longer than they should.

SECTION:

three

**HEALTH, WELFARE AND
MATERIAL DEPRIVATION**

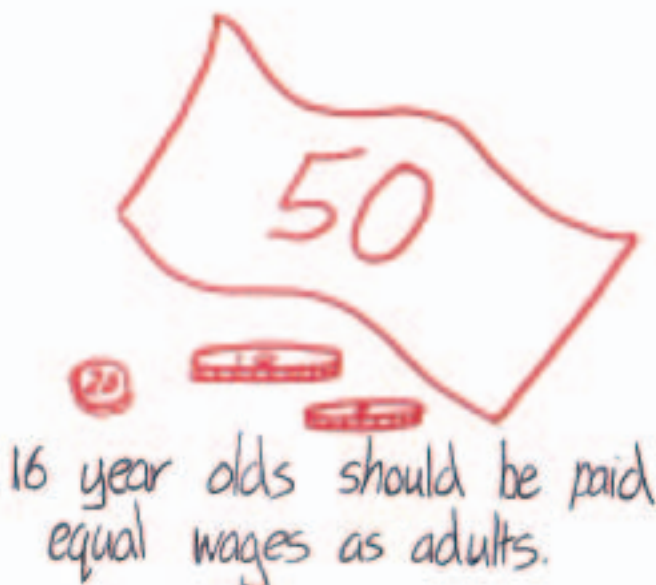
HEALTH, WELFARE AND MATERIAL DEPRIVATION

When we talk about 'health' we mean all different types of health, like physical health, mental health and sexual health. By 'welfare' we mean the basic well-being of a person or group of people, it can also mean the support that is given (through money or services) to people that need it to make their well-being better. Finally, maybe the easiest way to think about what is meant by 'material deprivation' is to think of what is meant when we use the words poverty, or say that some people are poor. It basically means that compared to other people, some people do not have as many things as others, some for example, might have low incomes, some might not their own cars and some might not own their own houses.

In this section you will see that health, welfare and material deprivation are all linked and that they affect each other. Having looked at all areas of health, welfare and material deprivation relating to children and young people in Northern Ireland, we think that the following things need to be given more attention:

- Lots of research shows that there is a link between poverty and poor health in children, young people and their families. Government agencies need to pay attention to this and try to do something about it.
- The rates of benefit and minimum wage for 16 and 17 year olds should be raised.
Young people should also have access to information about what are entitled to and this should be given to them in a way that they can understand.

At present, the minimum wage for 16 and 17 year olds is £3 per hour, the rate for 18-21 year olds is £4.10 and for adults it is £4.85. Research has found that young people do not know very much about their rights in terms of a minimum wage and their other rights when they have a job. Often this will mean that children and young people will not be treated fairly in their jobs, so it is important that they have information about these rights in a way that they can understand. In our research, a group of young people drew this picture as part of a bigger poster, they thought that young people should get paid the same as adults. Another group of young people we spoke to, who were doing a training course, felt that children and young people should not get taxed as much as adults since they did not get as much money as them.



- Agencies need to work together to meet the mental and physical health needs of children and young people.
- Children and young people should have the opportunity to be involved in decisions about health care services for them.

Often children and young people have little say in their health care. This means that we often do not know about the services that children and young people would like or think they need. A person working in health care thought that young people needed to be included in more decision about their health care, especially when it came to getting information/education about health issues. They said:

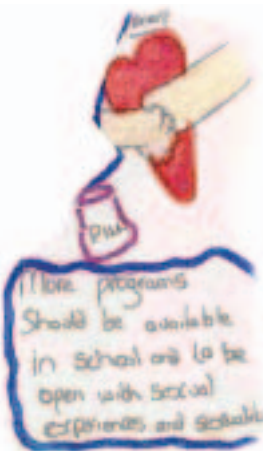
"We need to ask young people. As adults we don't know what works best for young people in terms of education. That's why peer education is good".

Health care can include many things like visits to the dentists, the GP, clinics, hospitals and opticians. Sometimes the language that medical or health care staff use can be difficult for children to understand, this means that it is hard for children to understand what they might be being told. Other times, staff will talk to parents as if the child was not there. Another person in health care told us about this, saying:

"a big issue is the language we use with young people. Young people are very vocal about medical staff who have swallowed a dictionary. Young people find it frustrating when a discussion is taking place between parents and medical staff at the end of their bed".

- There is a lack of special mental health services for children in care, secure accommodation (see previous section for definition) and in custody (e.g. prison). It is very important that something is done about this.
- There is a lack of good housing for young people who are 16 and 17 years old and leaving care or who are homeless.
- There needs to be good sexual health services for young people all over Northern Ireland. These should be small and big towns, they should be easy to get to and they should give information to children and young people in a way that they can understand.

Some young people suggested that there could also be more or better sex education in schools and that it might be good if children and young people were to learn about sex, relationships and sexual health at a younger age. A group of young people going to a secondary school drew this picture as part of a bigger poster about things children and young people should have more of a say in:



- Not all children and young people get the same health care services or information about health. This means that some groups are discriminated against (treated differently). There are lots of reasons why some children and young people might not get good information or services, but some of these groups would be young people who are gay, children and young people with disabilities, ethnic minority and traveller children. It is important that all children and young people in Northern Ireland get good information about health and good services.
- Policies/plans put in place to make our communities and streets safer must take the mental health needs of children and young people into account.

SECTION:

four

EDUCATION

EDUCATION

Children and young people can get their education in lots of ways, for example, through different types of schools, at home, in community projects, or in colleges. They also have rights 'to' education and when they are 'in' education. All children, for example, have the basic right to get an education no matter what their background or level of ability is and while they are in education they should be helped to develop (grow/progress) as much as possible.

This section looks at education in all different settings and for all different groups of children. It highlights areas where children's rights might not be fully respected and makes suggestions on how this might be made better. The main things that need more work here are:

- Children and young people told us that their school work often did not interest them:



Many children and young people, especially those who were doing the 11-plus or GCSEs complained about the pressure of school work. For example:

"I hate the way that teachers put so much pressure on us. When it comes to exams they are always putting so much pressure on us. My parents put pressure on me as well to do well which makes it even harder to cope with. I don't think we should get as much homework especially when the exams are on. We need to revise, never mind do our homework. It is hard to do everything. We need our own free time as well to relax and not worry about anything" (Boy, aged 14).

- There should be better school provision (services) for children with special educational needs

Lots of people who worked in education were worried about the lack of services for children with special educational needs. Many of them felt that it took too long to work out what these children needed and that even when their needs were known, that there was sometimes not enough things in place to meet those needs.

Some children attending special schools also felt that it was unfair that they had to go to school in a yellow bus (which they called the 'banana bus' or 'custard bus'). The bus often picked them up very early in the morning and they didn't get home until quite late. Some also felt that it was embarrassing to have to use this bus as it made them different to other young people and this was unfair. Some of these young people drew this picture and said the following things:



"We don't come home at the right time, it's too slow the banana bus... we're embarrassed on that bus. We hide under the seats" (Girl, aged 14).

"Get rid of the yellow custard bus, it's embarrassing" (Boy, aged 15).

- All people who work in schools and other places of education should be trained to spot bullying. They should also keep a record of bullying and help children involved.

Children and young people of all ages, abilities, cultures and backgrounds felt that bullying was unfair. Although a lot of schools have policies on bullying, some children and young people still felt that these were not enough. These are some examples of what children and young people told us about bullying, how it made them feel and what they thought about the ways schools sometimes dealt with it:

"At school I get very annoyed and I get treated badly and unfairly when I come into school no one likes me and I get blamed and people call me names and I do not have any friends" (Boy, aged 10).

"Algumas pessoas charmou-nos mames. Quando nos estamos a falare portugeeses, algumas pessoas ri-em de nos" - "Some people call us bad names. When we are talking in Portuguese, some people laugh at us" (Girl, aged 9).

"I think that it is unfair when you're bullied and there is nothing done about it. The school has put up signs like "Stop the Bully" and "Say No to Bullies" but they don't do anything to stop them" (Girl, aged 10).

- Children who do not get their education in usual schools (e.g. they are educated at home or in the community) should still get a good quality of education.
- Children should be more involved in schools' decisions and have their views taken into account. One way of doing this is for schools to have school councils (this is when some pupils and teachers have meetings together to talk about school decisions and pupils get a chance to say what they think).

Over half of all children and young people who talked about unfairness in school felt that there were things they would like to have more of a say in. In general, some children and young people felt that they were not listened to in school and that this often put them off saying anything. These are some of the most common things we were told:

"Sometimes school can get on my nerves cause I don't think children get enough respect from teachers and caretakers and I think some children are scarred about speaking their mind in case they get shouted at" (Girl, aged 11).

"Some teachers get on to you without listening to what you are saying" (Young Person in Focus Group).

The types of things that children and young people would like more of a say in included: sports and recreation facilities (these terms are explained in the next section), the school uniform, school dinner menus, other facilities in schools (e.g. lockers, computers etc.), school rules, what they were taught, the general design and upkeep of the school and the free use of school toilets.

This poster, designed by a group of young people shows some of the things they thought unfair about school and why:



- Traveller children should have the same rights to education as all other children. Something needs to be put in place to make sure that they get good quality education.
- We need to recognise that the conflict in Northern Ireland affects everyone, including children and young people. Schools need to be aware of this and helped to support pupils who are affected. There needs to be more places available for children who want to go to integrated schools (mixed religion).

SECTION:

**f
five**

**LEISURE, PLAY, RECREATION,
CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

LEISURE, PLAY, RECREATION, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

This section looks at the problems children and young people sometimes face when they try to use the play and leisure facilities in their local area. The words 'play', 'leisure' and 'recreation' refer to all those things children and young people like to do in their free time.

The following section looks at the areas where children's right to play and leisure are not being fully respected and makes suggestions on how this might be made better. The main issues/priorities which need more work here are:

- More time and money needs to be given to improve play, leisure, sport and art facilities for children and young people in Northern Ireland. There should be a strategy (plan) in place for this to happen.

Children of all ages living in all different areas of Northern Ireland told us that they wanted better play, leisure, sport and art facilities in their area and in their schools. Out of everything we asked children and young people about, this seemed to be the most important to them. Some children said there wasn't much to do where they lived, others said that the things that were there were either broken or not very good. Below is a picture one child drew of their park, showing that there were not very many things in it.



This is what another child wrote in her story telling Nigel Williams (the Children's Commissioner) about the park that she played in:

"Mr Williams, could you please give us money for the park? The swings we play on, are rusty and dirty and breaking down. There are big holes in the grass and dog's dirt, and on the ground there's glass and stones and rubbish. Every day the bigger ones are on the swings and when they leave, the swings are flipped over and spat on. What we need now is swings, new slides and monkey bars. Please give us money for our park" (Girl, aged 10).

- There is a need to identify the areas in Northern Ireland which have the poorest leisure, sport, play and art facilities so that work to improve these can begin.
- Not all children and young people have the same choice of play and leisure facilities, this is most true for children living in rural areas (the countryside) and those with disabilities, or it might be because there is nothing for people their age to do. Below is a drawing by a girl who lived in the countryside who had no parks near where she lives:



- Children's play and leisure space needs to be made safer so that children and young people can feel safe and protected and in their free time.

Lots of children and young people complained about the poor state of the places where they played and spent their free time. They told us that sometimes things were dirty or broken, vandalised (had writing all over them) or that there were dangerous things like broken bottles in the street or the park. Lots of children and young people said that they might feel frightened in the places where they played as sometimes older people would drink or smoke there or might bully them. The picture and words below are examples of the types of things that lots of children told us about this:



"Tá duine ann agus bíonn séag ól an tam ar fad agus cuireann sé eagla orm. Tá an páirc sugradha salach. Bíonn daoine ag ól agus ag caitheamh toitíní ansin. Bíonn daoine ag déanamh graffiti. Tá an páirc sugradha salach" - "There are people who drink all the time and they frighten me. The play park is dirty. People drink and smoke there. People write graffiti" (Girl, aged 10).

- Children and young people are the experts in knowing what appeals to young people and so they should always be involved in decisions about how to improve the sport, arts, play and leisure facilities which they will be using.
- Children from all sides of the community should be able to share the play and leisure facilities in their area. This could provide a good chance for children and young people from the Catholic and Protestant communities to mix with, and learn from one another.

SECTION:

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SIX

**YOUTH JUSTICE
AND POLICING**

YOUTH JUSTICE AND POLICING

Children and young people can sometimes come into contact with the police and the justice system (courts and lawyers). This section looks at different areas where children's rights might not be respected by the police and justice system.

- Plastic bullets which are sometimes used for breaking up crowds of people should not be used any more.
- There needs to be more information on the number of crimes carried out against children. When a crime has been committed against a child the police need to make sure they examine why the crime has happened and how they can stop this happening again.
- A child of 10 years of age (age of criminal responsibility) can be convicted of committing a crime. We think this age is too young and should be increased. There should be better polices, plans and services in place so as young children do not commit crime or if they do, to help them not do it again
- Children should not be put in prison unless it is completely necessary and is the last thing that can be done. Children should always be separated from adults when put in prison or secure custody.
- Sometimes when children are put in prison they need to be separated from everyone else and put in a room on their own. This is called 'solitary confinement'. The use of solitary confinement should no longer be used for children.
- The police need to work more with young people and put in place ways to stop discrimination (being treated differently) against some young people. This will help young people like and trust the police more.

Some young people felt the police picked on them because they were young and when they were not doing anything wrong. This is the type of thing that some young people told us about their experiences with the police:

"If you're on the street then you're up to no good, like. They just come and tell you to go ..."
(Young male, aged 17 - Youth group).

Only a small number of young people had these kinds of bad experiences with the police, but quite a large number of children and young people felt that the police didn't do a very good job. One out of five children and young people who told us what they thought about the police described them as being lazy, not doing enough to serve the community, being slow to arrive when crimes or accidents happened and/or not spending enough time on 'real' crimes because they spent too much time on traffic crimes like speeding and not wearing a seatbelt. This picture is an example of the types of things that that some children and young people thought about the police:




- Northern Ireland now has a new law which deals with anti social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour has been said to include a range of things, e.g. noisy neighbours, vandalism, graffiti, bad or threatening language, a lot of noise - particularly late at night - litter, drunken behaviour in the streets. This law can have a large impact on young people because, for example, young people often meet and gather on the street. It is suggested that this law goes against the CRC and should be removed.
- Sometimes children will witness a crime taking place and need to go to court to explain to the police, lawyers and judge what happened. The police, lawyers and judge need to have training to help these children and young people in this situation.
- Children who survive a traumatic [shocking/upsetting] experience including physical and emotional harm need to have proper services to give them support, help and advice in order to help them recover and get well.
- Children who are at risk of self harm (where children may harm themselves because they feel sad) and suicides needs to be given more attention. All the agencies who work with children need to work together to make sure that these children get the help they need.
- Restorative justice is a new process in Northern Ireland where both the person who commits a crime and the person who was a victim of that crime come together and work through the issue together. This allows the person who committed the crime to understand the effect their crime has had on the victim. It also gives the victim the chance to have their harm acknowledged/known. These restorative justice projects need to be examined to make sure that they work well.
- The restorative justice projects are organised by both people in the community and the police. It is suggested that the both the people from the community groups and the police should work together.
- Sometimes when young people commit crime people from their own community will physically punish (hurt) them. This is wrong and should be stopped.
- Some children and young people have parents or other family members in prison or who have been in prison. These young people need to be given support and programmes need to be put in place to provide help for these children.
- Some children and young people get involved in misusing drugs. The community needs to put in place programmes and help for these young people. The police need to work to ensure that drugs are not allowed to come into Northern Ireland.

Some children and young people complained about people in their community using drugs. This picture was drawn by a group of young people, who did not want drugs to be in their communities and did not like being offered them:

DRUGS

We should not have to worry about being offered drugs or worry about how to refuse them.



NOTES 1

UNCRC Children's Version

(Downloaded from UNICEF's UK Youth's Website - <http://therightssite.org.uk>)

Article 1

Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights in this Convention.

Article 2

The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.

Article 3

All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for you.

Article 4

Governments should make these rights available to you.

Article 5

Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children so that, as they grow, they learn to use their rights properly.

Article 6

You have the right to life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

Article 7

You have the right to a legally registered name and nationality. Also the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by your parents.

Article 8

Governments should respect children's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.

Article 9

You should not be separated from your parents unless it is for your own good - for example, if a parent is mistreating or neglecting you. If your parents have separated, you have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might harm you.

Article 10

Families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact or get back together as a family.

Article 11

Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally.

Article 12

You have the right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you, and to have your opinions taken into account.

Article 13

You have the right to get, and to share, information as long as the information is not damaging to yourself or others.

Article 14

You have the right to think and believe what you want and to practise your religion, as long as you are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide children on these matters.

Article 15

You have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 16

You have the right to privacy. The law should protect you from attacks against your way of life, your good name, your family and your home.

Article 17

You have the right to reliable information from the mass media. Television, radio, and newspapers should provide information that you can understand, and should not promote materials that could harm you.

Article 18

Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments should help parents by providing services to support them, especially if both parents work.

Article 19

Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for, and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 20

If you cannot be looked after by your own family, you must be looked after properly, by people who respect your religion, culture and language.

Article 21

If you are adopted, the first concern must be what is best for you. The same rules should apply whether the adoption takes place in the country where you were born or if you are taken to live in another country.

Article 22

If you are a child who has come into a country as a refugee, you should have the same rights as children born in that country.

Article 23

If you have a disability, you should receive special care and support so that you can live a full and independent life.

Article 24

You have the right to good quality health care and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that you can stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 25

If you are looked after by your local authority rather than your parents, you should have your situation reviewed regularly.

Article 26

The government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Article 27

You have a right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet your physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.

Article 28

You have a right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children's human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 29

Education should develop your personality and talents to the full. It should encourage you to respect your parents, your own and other cultures.

Article 30

You have a right to learn and use the language and customs of your family whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where you live.

Article 31

You have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities.

Article 32

The government should protect you from work that is dangerous or might harm your health or education.

Article 33

The government should provide ways of protecting you from dangerous drugs.

Article 34

The government should protect you from sexual abuse.

Article 35

The government should make sure that you are not abducted or sold.

Article 36

You should be protected from any activities that could harm your development.

Article 37

If you break the law, you should not be treated cruelly. You should not be put in a prison with adults and you should be able to keep in contact with your family.

Article 38

Governments should not allow children under 16 to join the army. In war zones, you should receive special protection.

Article 39

If you have been neglected or abused, you should receive special help to restore your self-respect.

Article 40

If you are accused of breaking the law, you should receive legal help. Prison sentences for children should only be used for the most serious offences.

Article 41

If the laws of a particular country protect you better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws should stay.

Article 42

The government should make the Convention known to all parents and children.

Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure all children get all their rights.

NOTES 2

Useful Addresses

Childline (Help line for children and young people in trouble or danger)

Address Freepost 1111, London, N1 0BR

Telephone Freephone 0800 1111

Website <http://www.childline.org.uk>

Children's Law Centre (NI)

Address Chalky, freepost BEL3837, Belfast. BT15 1BR

Telephone Chalky helpline for children, freephone 0808 808 5678

Website <http://www.childrenslawcentre.org>
(follow green links for children's information)

NICCY (Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People)

Address NICCY, Millennium House, 17-25 Great Victoria Street, Belfast. BT2 7BN

Telephone (028) 9031 1616

Website www.niccy.org

NSPCC (online confidential advice)

Website <http://www.there4me.com>

UNICEF

(Youth website) <http://therightssite.org.uk>

(Information on your rights and useful contacts/links)