CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NICCY – AN OFFICIAL’S PERSPECTIVE

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CONTEXT

• **A time of excitement** - devolution and a new NI Assembly

• **A new Department** – Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

• **The Human Rights Act 1998**
  - Coming into force Oct 2000

• **A Human Rights Unit established**
  - To promote a culture of rights and responsibilities within government departments;
  - To prepare for implementation of the Human Rights Act in NI
  - Introduced a new ‘lens’ of ‘rights and responsibilities’
AN ALIGNMENT OF THE PLANETS

• Well developed and influential voluntary and community sector

• The influence of Trond Waage!

• Transition from human rights to children’s rights specifically

• Visit to Norway to see it in operation

• **The result:** approval for a Commissioner for Children and Young People and a 10 year Strategy
TAKING IT FORWARD

• **Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003**
  - Order in Council made at Westminster
  - Office created to ‘safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people’

• **Issues**
  - Extent of the powers given
  - Inclusion of non-devolved bodies within remit

• **Consultation**
  - More of a partnership
MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

• A new role which called for a new process!

• Regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments

• Central involvement of young people
  - Role plays
  - Participated in interview panel

• The result: the appointment of Nigel Williams in October 2003

• 10 years on: I’m proud to be associated with NICCY!