

NICCY Youth Panel Initiative



Campaign on negative stereotyping of young people





Introduction

What is NICCY?

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People's job is to protect and safeguard the rights of children and young people. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a list of promises that the Government has made to children and young people. These are called rights and we make sure that government keeps these promises. You can take a look at these and download a poster [here](#).

What is Disable the Label?

This initiative was set up by the NICCY Youth Panel, to try to help with the issue of negative stereotyping of children and young people. Stereotyping was seen as a huge problem by children and young people today. We decided to set up the initiative to try and help this. We believe media are sometimes responsible for shaping people's opinions and think that by getting the media to publish realistic pictures of young people today will help to improve stereotyping. For more information please take a look at our [website](#). When you are there, fill out the Have your Say form.

What is this?

This is a pack to help you plan, implement and follow on your own campaign on negative stereotyping. We will go through all of the steps we took during our campaign. Each section is laid with examples to help you out. Good luck!





Why get involved?

Just because we are young doesn't mean we don't have anything important to say – especially when things affect us! The UNCRC says that young people should have a say in decisions that affect them (article 12). In their last report on Children's Rights in the UK, the United Nations reported that more work needed to be done to combat negative stereotyping of children and young people including by the media. NICCY recently asked some questions in the [Young Life and Times Survey](#) about young people's experience of negative stereotyping. We found that 85% felt that young people are judged negatively just because they are young. Two out of three people had been treated as suspicious by staff in a shop and almost 8 out of 10 people felt that the media portrays young people mostly negatively. We think this is a big problem and we would like as many people to get involved in campaigning.

Please let us know if you use this resource for campaigning. For More info give us a shout!

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Please contact the Communications team at NICCY if you require alternative formats of this material.





What do you want to say?

Step 1: Deciding what message you want to communicate.

The first step in any good campaign is to decide your message or what you want to say. Before deciding what issue we wanted to work on we worked with all of the NICCY youth panel to decide what was most important to us to work on. You can see here that challenging stereotypes of young people was seen as the biggest problem:

Ideas for Youth Panel project

Challenging Stereotypes of young people	Challenging Racism	Promoting youth voice in education	More accessible transport for young people	Promoting age appropriate activities for youth	Challenging sectarianism	Promote launch of a Youth Assembly	Promote equality of access to EMA	Awareness raising of young people's health issues	Reduce street crime and violence	Improve opportunities for young people in rural areas
How we are treated in transport Discrimination	Racial discrimination	Compulsory school councils	Public transport in rural areas	Better opportunities	Sectarianism	Young people not getting a say in Parliament 108!!!!!!!	EMA entitlement	Better sexual health education	Give teenagers more things to do	Better opportunities and more chances to involved in things by r only advertising bigger are
Being followed in shops		No say in education systems	Transport prices	More activities	Sectarianism i.e. football tops are not allowed to be worn in Nationalist/ Unionist areas		EMA ...	Health promotion		
How adults and media portray young people Stereotypes of young people Youth being discriminated			Cheaper transport	More things to do More youth groups More roley poley chairs		Youth government – as in make one! Get children a better chance to make decisions and be heard	Money for all kids – just because your parents earn lots of money doesn't mean they will give you an allowance			
Make older people aware of the fact that not all young people are the same and that we shouldn't be discriminated against.				Age limits for concerts etc Should be under-age clubs						

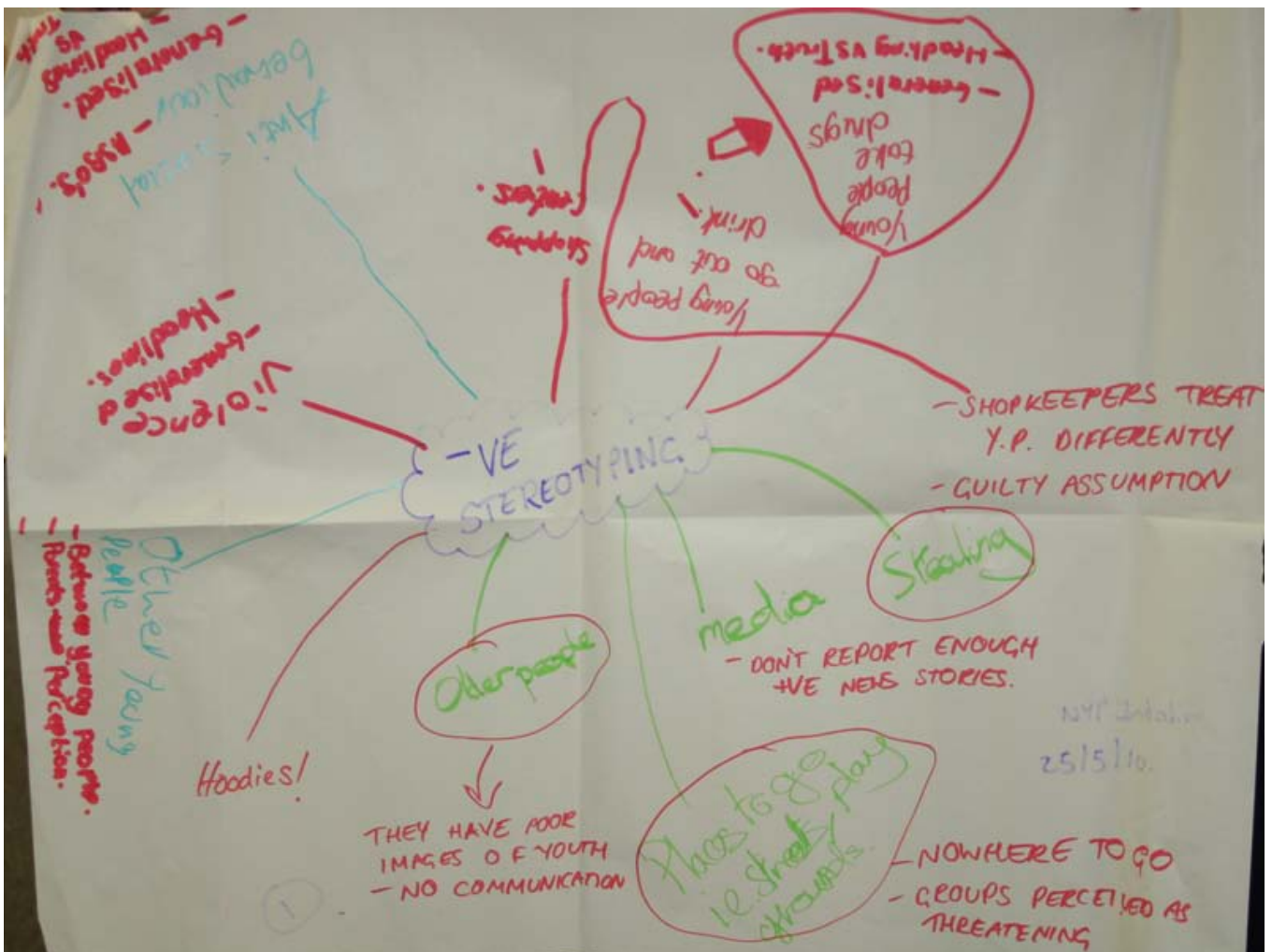


Step 2: What are the problems?

Next we looked at all of the problems that happen because young people are negatively stereotyped. To help with this it's good to do a bit of research we suggest you try:

- The internet
- Local newspapers
- Reports
- Organisations who work on this issue

Here's what we came up with:



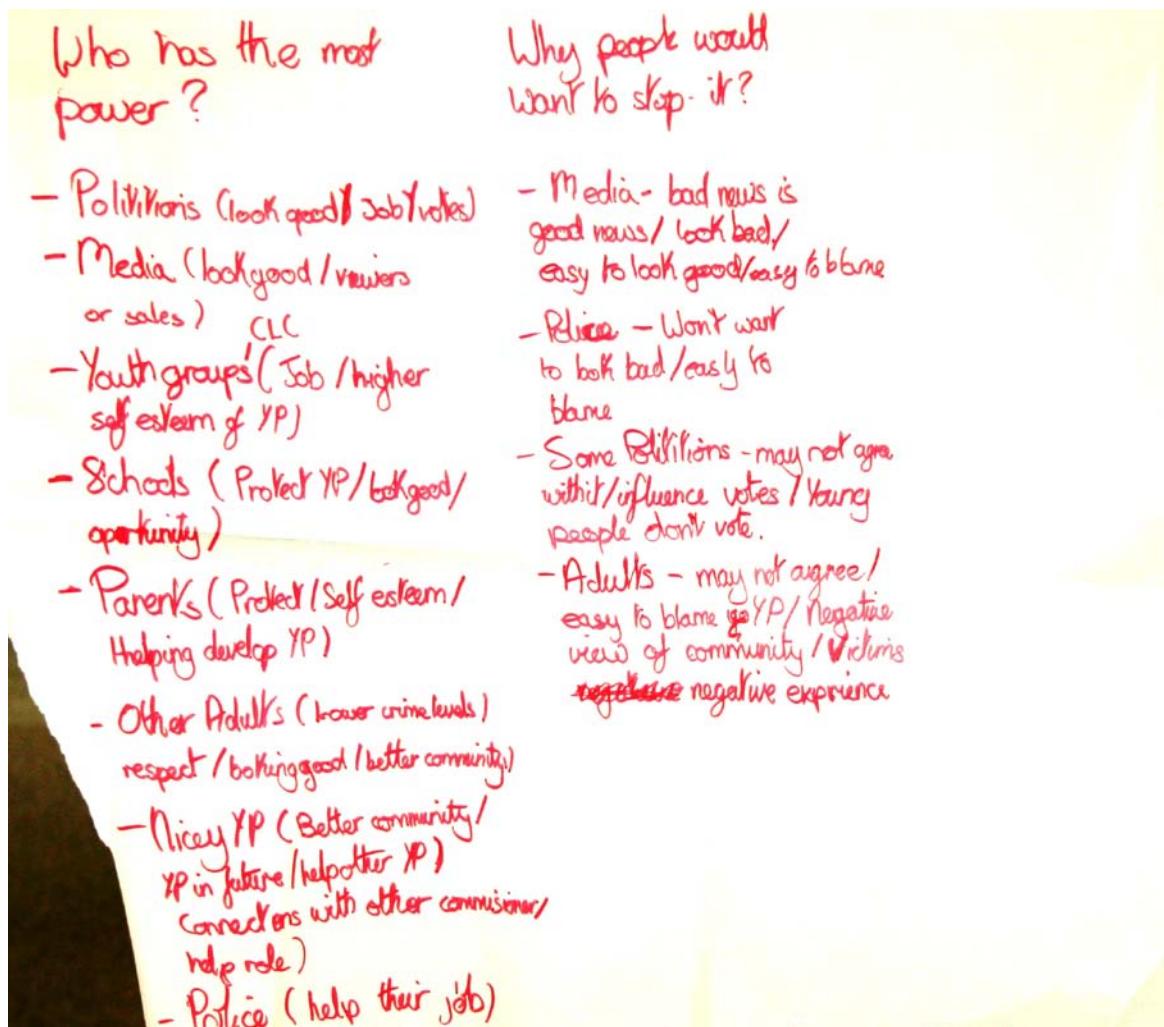
Who can do something about it?

A number of public organisations are responsible for issues which affect you. These public bodies are responsible to departments in government. They are usually the people who can make a real change.

Step 1: Who has an interest in this issue?

Once you have thought about your message make a list of all of the people who have some kind of interest in this issue. Think about those who would be interested in helping you and why they might do it.

This is what our list on stereotyping looked like:

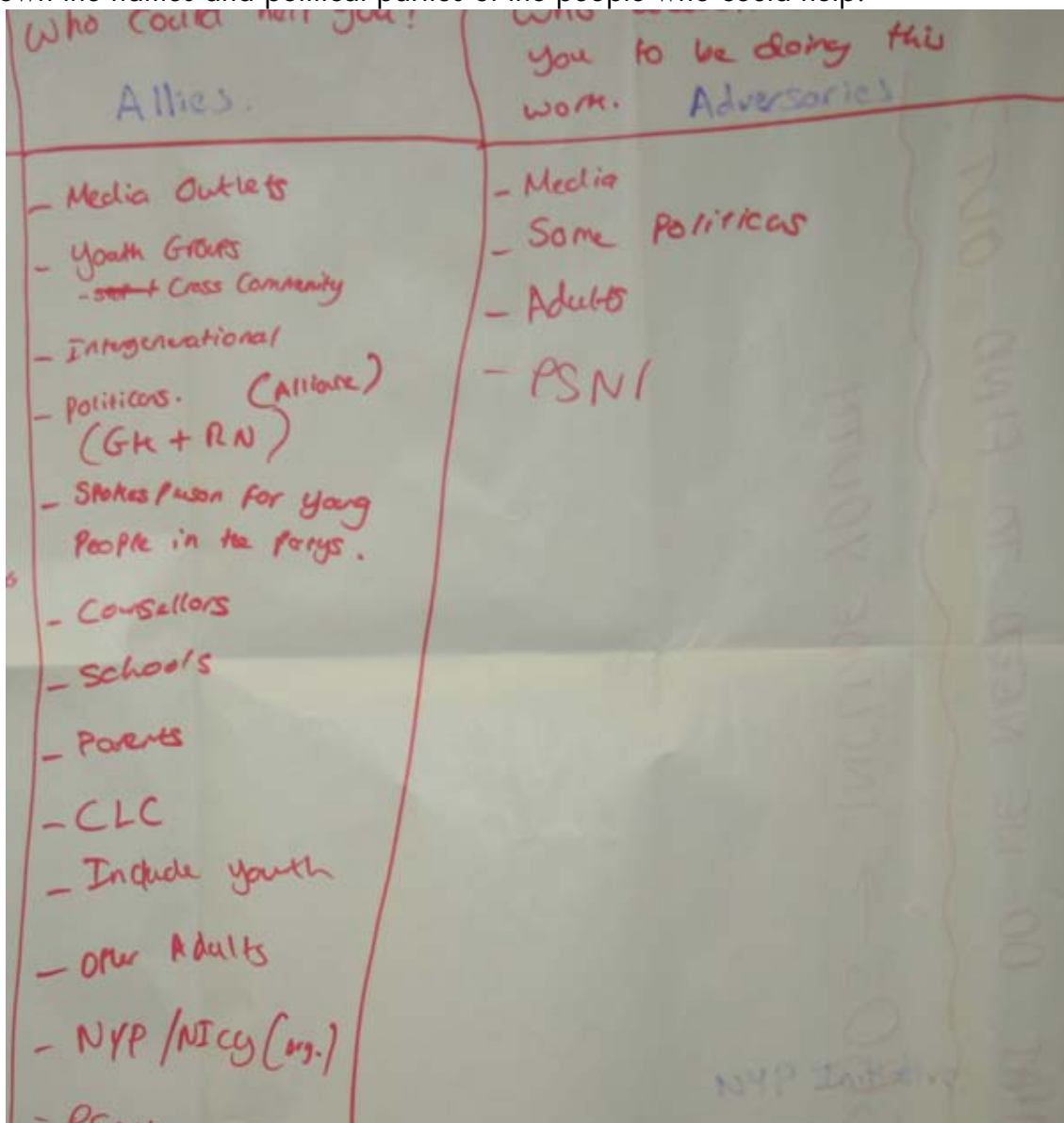


Step 2: Who are the people responsible to make a difference?

Once you have decided the message you want to get across you should be able to identify which government department is responsible for dealing with this. A list of departments can be found here: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/gov.htm>

Your local MLA or councillor may also be able to help you with your campaign. If you don't know who they are you can find out by typing your post code in to the WIMPS (Where is my public servant?) website: www.wimps.tv or on www.theyworkforyou.com.

Write down the names and political parties of the people who could help.





Step 3: Decide who you could contact.

Once you've found out who could help then it's time to decide who you want to contact. Think about who could have the most impact or influence and also who is most likely to read about your concerns and do something about it.

What we found:

Negative stereotyping of young people is an issue which can be addressed by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister – The Junior Ministers in this department have a remit to look after all issues which affect children and young people. This is also an equality issue. Each department has equality officers whose job it is to make sure everyone is treated fairly. Your local MLA may be able to help you access them.

We also decided that there we had some other key people to contact, including PSNI and local media.



How do you communicate with them?

Once you've worked out who can do something about your issue the next step is to start talking, ringing and emailing. Communication is what it's all about!

Step 1: What is the best method of communication to your target audience?

Each audience is slightly different, different people listen in different ways. For each group write down all of your ideas on how you will get your message across. We developed a plan to get our message across. We had four sub groups; Educating Adults (such as Politicians and PSNI); Engaging with children and young people (this campaign pack is one way we are doing that); Communications (such as our website) and the Media subgroup to make sure we let local media know what we are doing and why it's important. You can read more about the plan at the end of this document.

Step 2: Who can help you?

Messages are stronger when they come from lots of people so it's really important to think of as many people as possible who can help you strengthen your message. For each of your target audiences think about who can help you. Young people from your local youth group or school may be interested in getting involved in this issue. Organisations such as Northern Ireland Youth Forum, Young NCB, WIMPS? ... and of course NICCY Youth Panel may be able to provide help and support if you need it – and it's always good to share your ideas with others!

All there is left to do is DO IT! Make sure that people hear what you have to say ... and that they take action!





Follow Up

It doesn't end once you have completed your initial campaign. It can take a long time for things in society to change. Don't lose hope! Keep in touch with those who have the power to make a difference and make sure they are working to improve the situation you are concerned about.

Step 1: Did they listen?

Did you get a response from those you contacted? Often you will get an initial letter to say that your message has been received, but is there any evidence to show that the person responsible is taking your concerns seriously and intends to do something about it. If you don't think you are being taken seriously keep asking.

Step 2: Has anything been done to create change?

The person you have contacted might get back in touch to tell you about what they have been doing, for example asking questions in the Assembly or working on a policy to make a difference for the people affected by your issue.

You can follow what is going on in the Assembly and the questions being asked by MLAs by logging on to www.theyworkforyou.com

Step 3: What can you do next?

We have already said that change can take a long time but make sure you keep asking what developments have happened until you start to see change. Thank about who else you might want to contact to help with your campaign and remember to let the team at NICCY know what you have been doing.



Appendix: NICCY Youth Panel action plan

Aim: To challenge negative stereotyping on children and young people in Northern Ireland

Objectives:

1. Encourage media to publish positive stories about children and young people
2. Use NICCY website and social networking to gather views on this issue from children and young people
3. Educate adults by discussing the problems related to this issue with politicians, PSNI and other relevant organisations
4. Engage other children and young people in campaigning on this issue

Media sub-group

The objective of this group is to challenge how young people are presented in the media, raise awareness among journalists of the negative impact which stereotyping can have on children and young people, and encourage them to print positive news stories. We recognize that journalists may need our support to find positive stories to print which will be interesting for people to read. We will work with other young people to gather their views and present positive stories.

Actions:

- Create a recognizable brand for the project
- Clearly communicate to the media why we feel negative stereotyping is a problem
- Carry out a publicity opportunity to raise awareness of the project

Communications sub-group

The objective of this strand of work is to publicly communicate what we are doing to gather support for our campaign through the internet. It is important to let people know what we are doing so we can start to raise awareness that it shouldn't be acceptable to treat teenagers differently and in a negative way.

Actions:

- Create a dedicated page on the NICCY website
- Ask young people to give their views on negative stereotyping through the site
- Explore other options for social networking



Educating Adults sub-group

We plan to work alongside politicians and police to try and get their support for treating and thinking about young people fairly. If older people understood how isolating and frustrating it is to be stereotyped negatively just because you are young then they might take more care to try and stop it. Police can be allies as well as adversaries when you are thinking about negative stereotyping. The Chief Constable has made improving relations between PSNI and young people a priority – we hope to help them by sharing the views of children and young people so they can make changes in how they work.

Actions:

- Arrange meetings with PSNI and politicians to discuss some of the problems related to negative stereotyping
- Use questionnaires to find out why adults think young people are negatively stereotyped
- Write a report on the project for adults
- Design a workshop for adults to help them understand the problems of negative stereotyping

Engaging Children and Young People sub-group

We wish to engage with as wide variety of children and young people across Northern Ireland as possible to hear their valuable views on stereotyping. To do this we will speak directly with young people by arranging to visit youth clubs and other public areas to hear their views as well as giving the opportunity to respond to a questionnaire on our website.

Actions:

- Gather views from Children and young people through the website and questionnaires
- Create a young person friendly report on the project
- Design a workshop for young people to help them campaign in their communities for better understanding among adults and young people

