

Bernie Redmond
Safeguarding Policy and Legislation Branch
Room A3.5
Castle Buildings
Belfast BT4 3SQ

16 October 2014

Dear Bernie,

RE: A Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland - 2014/15 -
A Draft Document for Consultation.

Thank you for the recent invite to quality review an early draft of the DHSSPS Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People. I have considered the request and feel that as we do not directly provide safeguarding services it would not be appropriate for us to feed into this stage of the drafting. However, once this stage has been completed, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to comment on the document before it goes to public consultation.

NICCY would urge the DHSSPS to ensure that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is fully embedded into the new policy. The UNCRC is an overarching framework which guides the development of laws, policies and services so that all children are protected, nurtured and empowered. The UK Government, including Northern Ireland, is a signatory to the Convention and it has agreed to uphold the rights of children and young people based on it. The UN Convention consists of 41 articles, each of which details a different type of right. These rights are not ranked in order of importance; instead they interact with one another to form one integrated set of rights. This policy review exercise provides an opportunity to consider all parts of the policy for its child rights relevance and impact. This Departmental Safeguarding policy has particular relevance to core protection rights listed within the UNCRC which relate to the safeguarding of children against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered exploitation or abuse of any kind. These are listed below.

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

Children who cannot be looked after by their own family must be looked after properly, by people who respect their religion, culture and language.

Article 34

The Government should protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

Article 36

The Government must protect children from all forms of exploitation that might harm them.

Article 39

Children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to help them to recover.

There are also four additional UNCRC articles known as 'general principles', these rights are the bedrock for securing the additional rights in the Convention. We would strongly encourage you to consider these during the policy development process.

1. The rights guaranteed by the UNCRC must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind (Article 2);
2. The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3);
3. Every child has the right to life, survival and development (Article 6); and
4. The child's view must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting him or her (Article 12).

I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to this document in due course. In the meantime do not hesitate to contact me if you feel we can be of any further help at this time.

Yours Sincerely