

## **Your Voice Matters - Summary**

During the summer and early autumn, the NICCY team undertook a three month long engagement programme with more than 350 children and young people aged 8 - 21 from across NI.

The 'conversation' was called 'Your Voice Matters...Because You Matter'. The primary aim was to discuss the Commissioner's priorities. These are:

- Educational Inequalities;
- Child Poverty/impact of austerity;
- C&YP's Mental Health;
- UNCRC's general measures of implementation.

In addition the Commissioner, Koulla Yiasouma wanted to hear from children and young people about other issues affecting their lives.

Under each priority there were a number of key findings.

### **Educational inequalities:**

- Negative impact of academic selection process
- Impact of social inequalities on education
- Dealing with bullying
- Inadequate support for those with dyslexia and other special educational needs
- Additional support for literacy and numeracy issues needed
- Adequate support from classroom Assistants:
- Class sizes

### **Children and Young People's Mental Health:**

- Adequate training for those working with young people
- Importance of Early Intervention
- Awareness of services among young people
- Service provision
- Stigma of having mental health issues
- Prevalence of suicide and self-harming

### **Poverty and Austerity:**

- Financial implications including benefit cuts:
- Impact of poverty on young people in education:
- Impact on family life:
- Provision of services:
- Impact on communities:
- Housing and homelessness:

- Employment issues:
- Impact on childcare:
- Support for young people leaving care or living independently:

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - General Measures of Implementation**

- Lack of awareness of the UNCRC
- Varying levels of understanding on children's rights among adults
- Children not allowed to have their say on important life-defining decisions
- Around 75% reported they had been treated badly in a shop or public place because of their age
- Majority felt discriminated against
- Negative stereotyping in the media
- Not always easy to access services

### **Other issues raised:**

- Legacy of the Conflict
- Community Safety
- LGBT inclusion
- Political engagement
- Policing and Justice
- Play and leisure
- Media portrayal of young people
- Living in care
- Employment support:
- Family life
- Addiction

The event on 19<sup>th</sup> November is young people led. A series of workshops will take place on the night, enabling children and young people to further discuss the issues and agree their way forward.

The Commissioner will consider the issues raised as she prepares next year's Business Plan for NICCY and her next Corporate Plan.