Play is Not a Luxury it is a Right

Koulla Yiasouma
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People

Playboard Conference, 26th November 2015
we all had a playroom growing up. It was called "outside."
NI COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

• “Safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young persons” in Northern Ireland (Article 5)

• Have regard to “any relevant provision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child” (Article 6)

The Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003
Key Departments and Policy Issues

“The Commissioner shall keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services”  (Article 7)

• Key Priorities
  ▪ Education Inequalities
  ▪ Child Poverty
  ▪ Adolescent mental health and well-being

• Reviewing core work on children
• Implementation of children’s rights
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

“The child has a right to rest, leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities”

Article 31

Definition of Play:
“any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise”

General comment 17
My Mum said
“go and play outside”
“with the sole exception of Wales, the right to play and leisure is not fully enjoyed by all children in the State party”, calling upon the government “to strengthen its efforts to guarantee the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts”

Concluding Observations, 2008
Discrimination of Children and Young People

• 85% believe that they are judged negatively because of their age

• 87% - have personally experienced discrimination because of their age

• 59% told to move on when standing outside with friends

• 67% of young people frequently experience age-related discrimination in shops

• 79% of young people feel that the media portrayal of young people is mostly negative

YLT, 2010
PLAYING OUT
OR PLAYING UP?
Do you know where your child is?

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/pcsp
'angry' 'annoyed' 'awkward' 'bad' 'confused' 'disrespected' 'EMBARRASSED' 'frustrated' 'hurt' 'insignificant' 'misjudged' 'sad' 'un-trusted' 'uncomfortable' 'unwanted' 'unwelcome' 'upset' 'victimised' 'worried' 'worthless'
“... a particular responsibility to encourage and promote the role that can be played by children and young people in community planning. The Community Planning Partnership should seek to do this through reference to the structure set out in the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People’s (NICCY) proposal for a Northern Ireland regional model of engagement. The Partnership should also consider an appropriate method of engagement to involve children and young people and should use a mechanism such as youth forums or other similar arrangements.”

Community Planning Guidance, (section 6.8)
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

“.......... imposes on States Parties the specific and continuing obligation, even where resources are inadequate, to ‘strive to ensure the widest possible enjoyment of the relevant rights under the prevailing circumstances.’ No regressive measures in relation to the article 31 rights are permitted.”

General Comment No.17
Age Discrimination Legislation

The Commissioner may issue guidance and provide advice and information on any matter concerning the best interest of children and young persons (Articles 7 and 8)

“We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to those aged 16 and over.”

Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness, April 2015
“There’s nothing really to do here except the youth forum and it’s only on once a month. Unless you like doing sports but I don’t so I mostly just talk to friends on the internet.”

Another young person felt that, if they had not been part of an advocacy group, they would know nothing about children’s right to play, as it is not promoted in schools.
“Paramilitaries cause the trouble. They don’t do anything good for communities. They try and get young people to join – even 15 and 14 year olds”
CHILDHOOD is a state of mind which ends the moment a PUDDLE is first viewed as an OBSTACLE instead of an OPPORTUNITY.