

ENGAGING WITH OUR STAKEHOLDERS

The Commissioner has a clear duty under the [legislation](#) which established the post to engage with stakeholders. The duty is outlined in [Article 7](#) of the legislation. These are enshrined in duties to: promote understanding and awareness of children and young people's best interests, ensure that that stakeholders know about the Commissioner's work and raise issues relating to children and young people.

All of NICCY's work is guided by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), which in the case of the engaging with stakeholders includes Articles 12 and 13 of the Convention.

Therefore engaging with stakeholders is important to make sure the Commissioner is effective and efficient in meeting NICCY's obligations in the legislation which created the office.

In doing this the Commissioner has developed extensive ways to reach out to stakeholders.

This has involved partnership working with key groups including:

- children and young people ;
- parents and/or carers;
- schools;
- youth groups
- politicians;
- the media;
- legal and other professional practitioners;
- community and voluntary groups; and,
- professional associations.

Programmes were designed and delivered to engage with them and to hear what they said about children's rights. This work was essential to make sure that those who needed to know about NICCY could be supported and there was added value to the work of all who were involved.

Some examples of how NICCY engaged with stakeholders are detailed below, all of which have been designed and developed by the Commissioner's professional staff disciplines to make sure the most up-to-date methods, measurements and evaluations are undertaken, including use of the Barcelona Principles endorsed by the Global Alliance of PR and

Communications Management and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, and professional participation measurement, including bespoke evaluations developed by the Commissioner's participation staff.

A schools' awareness campaign reached out to 40,000+ pupils. This was done through a variety of tactics. These included individual visits to schools by the Commissioner and visits to deliver workshops by [Participation Officers](#).

The views of children and young people in the work of the Commissioner(s) were a priority in corporate planning with the [Shout!](#) And [URVoice](#) campaigns, which specifically targeting children and young people.

Included in the tactics to reach the core audience of the Commissioner were bespoke materials, media campaigns and a series of visits across Northern Ireland to discuss important issues with groups of young people.

For five years running annual publication was produced, which was included as an insert in a daily newspaper, with a circulation at the time of more than 90,000. This was targeted at a key date in the last week of November of each year when circulation was highest. This effectively meant that the Commissioner's key messages and work of the previous year was communicated to parents, carers and other readers. The publication was commended by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations in its annual Pride Awards.

An ongoing programme of work on engaging with politicians was undertaken. The Commissioner and/or staff, with children and young people met with Ministers, MLAs, party representatives and others as part of this work. Political engagement over the past decade has included a variety of channels to reach this important audience and influence attitudes towards children and young people's rights and best interests.

Methods used included presenting oral and written evidence to Assembly and Westminster Committees, meetings with individual MLAs and Ministers, attending political party conferences and making representations to Senior Departmental official and Ministerial Special Advisers.

An audit of MLAs conducted in 2011 showed that 95% were aware of the Commissioner's work and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition the impact of this work can be seen by year-on-year increased references to the Convention by MLAs and especially by Ministers. The UNCRC has now also been included in specific work of Departments, such as the Youth Justice Review, Paediatric Care Review and throughout several education policies and guidance.

You can view our extensive evidence to committees as part of our overall work to engage with stakeholders through consultation responses and submissions by visiting the [section of the website that lists each submission](#).

A key stakeholder group for NICCY is the Northern Ireland media. This is both a channel to reach stakeholder groups such as parents and politicians, but is also an audience in itself as coverage can be influenced by explaining the importance of children and young people's rights and the work of the Commissioner.

As a result of the work of NICCY all Northern Ireland media outlets – on television, radio, and print – have carried stories on the work of the Commissioner.

This coverage, which included online news providers, ensured that over the past 10 years the work of the Commissioner reached out to a wide audience – for example when NICCY launched research on the [experience of children with Asperger's Syndrome in school](#) this was covered by media across Northern Ireland.

Other examples include:

- When the Commissioner launched research into the difficulties [young people with learning disabilities](#) transferring to adult services this was covered in [print](#) and broadcast media;
- Ongoing support for members of the NICCY Youth Panel to have their voice heard in [newspapers](#) and on television and radio, including the [We Want the Airwaves](#) campaign.
- As part of the Commissioner's 2005 challenge to health services to provide [improved speech and language therapy services](#) for children in Northern Ireland the BBC carried the evidence extensively on its local outlets and [website](#).

The Chartered Institute for Public Relations has recognised the work of the Commissioner's communications staff, by presenting a gold award in the Pride Awards as the Best In-House team in Northern Ireland on three times in the past 10 years as well as several other accolades for the team's work in reaching out to engage the media.

A key stakeholder group in schools are teachers and trainee teachers. These are engaged through workshop events, support during [training](#) and in classroom projects.

More than 1,300 student teachers, youth and community workers received training; this training raised awareness of the Convention and will influence their work and practice.

You can read more about this work in other parts of the web pages devoted to the impact of the Commissioner's work.

In addition the NICCY has delivered training events have been held with a range of professional organisations including nurses, social workers, legal professionals and teachers. Each of these stakeholder groups has been identified as a specific group to engage with, and bespoke workshops and presentations have been delivered.

The Commissioner also identified the need to work with colleagues across Europe to share best practice and identity learning opportunities. NICCY is a member of the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children and Patricia Lewsley-Mooney held the [presidency in 2010/11](#).

In a key event during her presidency the Commissioner worked with colleagues across Europe to engage children and young people, to hear their views directly in a project that saw members of the European Network of Youth Advisers contribute to a series of e-forums before [presenting their work in Belfast](#). In addition the Commissioner's Youth Panel challenged children's commissioners and ombudsmen from all parts of Europe to [see things from a child's perspective](#).

The Commissioner has also been at the forefront of using technology to reach stakeholders. The [NICCY website](#) has seen year-on-year growth in page views, with significant evidence that key research is being accessed by a wide range of users including universities and colleges.

The website includes a feature that allows users to share the work of the Commissioner from the site to their social media pages with one click.

The Commissioner's [Twitter page](#) has attracted almost 1,400 followers, and a [regular e-zine](#) is used to share information to key stakeholders. In addition the Commissioner's [Youtube channel](#) has shared the work of the Commissioner and features the NICCY Youth Panel and other children and young people expressing their views on key issues, including one video that has attracted almost 1,300 views.

The impact of engagement work has been assessed to make sure that the Commissioner's duties in the establishing legislation have been met. Research has shown there is an increased awareness of the Commissioner over the 10 years in research carried out by independent organisations. As previously mentioned political engagement has produced significant awareness, and complete coverage in media outlets has made sure that stakeholders in all parts of Northern Ireland have access to information on the NICCY's work.