Citizenship and Young People’s Rights

- Children's & Young People’s Rights can be seen as a pathway to Citizenship
- Children's & Young People’s Rights are about empowerment (of all)
- Children's & Young People’s Rights are exercised every day e.g. accessing education, health serv’s
- Citizenship is about belonging and understanding your rights and the rights of others

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
Overview

1. NICCY’s Role and Remit & Citizenship


3. The Rights Based Approach: Empowering Citizens


5. The ‘Children’s & Young People’s Strategy’
NICCY’s Role & Remit

Legislation:

‘The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order (2003)’……

……Our work is based on / to have regard to the UNCRC

(The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child)
NICCY’s Role, Remit & Citizenship

Mission

‘To safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people’

[Art’ 6 (1)]

Vision

‘A society in NI where all Children and Young people flourish, are valued and their views are respected.’
Article 7 (2003 Order) outlines the Duties of the Commissioner

**Promote**
- Awareness and understanding of the rights and best interests of Children & Young People;
- Awareness of function / location of the Commissioner and how to contact her

**Monitor**
- The effectiveness of law and practice;
- The adequacy and effectiveness of services;

**Advise**
- Advise government and relevant authorities
- Communicate effectively with children and young persons and their parents
- Seek views of Children & Young People

**NICCY Statutory Duties**
Undertake / Commission / Advise

- Research or educational activities concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons or the exercise of her functions;
- Conduct investigations as she considers necessary or expedient to meet her duties listed above;
- Compile info’, provide advice and publish any matter (including research, educational activities, investigations and advice) concerning the rights and best interests;

Issue Guidance / Make Representations

- In relation to any matter concerning the rights or best interests of children or young persons;
- Make representations or recommendations to any body or person relating to the rights and best interests of children and young persons;

Advocacy / Addressing breaches of Rights

- Assist with complaints to relevant authorities;
- Bring, intervene in or assist in legal proceedings.

Articles 8-15 outline the Commissioner’s general powers
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC]

‘The most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child.
UNCRC Principles

- Non discrimination in the application of the 42 UNCRC rights
- Best interests – to be taken into account in decision making
- Life, survival and development
- Voice of Young Person to be heard and views taken seriously

✓ Underpin all NICCY’s work
✓ Support citizenship
The UNCRC

Preamble section of the UNCRC that provides the context to the rights contained in the Convention, reflects that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights …

Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding…”
The Rights Based Approach: Empowering Citizens

‘The Convention sees the child as a subject.

(‘not an object of charity … given support, not as a matter of right, but because people have felt pity for them. This is one of the attitudes that the Convention challenges’).

S/he has the right to schooling, health care and an adequate standard of living, as well as to be heard and have his or her views respected. This goes as much for the cute toddler as for the problematic teenager.’

Thomas Hammarburg
November 2009
The Rights Based Approach: Empowering Citizens

- Empowering
- Accountability
- Non-discrimination and equality
- Participation
- Progressive realisation

Citizens are ‘rights holders’
Government are ‘duty bearers’
UN Committee Examination of UK State Party

UK State Party examination 23 & 24 May 2016

Concluding Observations & Recommendations
[Adopted by UN Committee [CRC] on 3 June 2016]
Published on 9 June 2016
Establish structures for the active and meaningful participation of children & young people - giving due weight to their views:

- Designing laws
- Designing policies
- Designing programmes
- Designing services

Supported by active citizenship and human rights education

At the Local level

At the National level

Concluding Observations & Recommendations
UN Committee [CRC] 2016

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
Concluding Observations & Recommendations
UN Committee [CRC] 2016

And especially children in vulnerable situations such as:

- With disabilities
- Discrimination
- Violence & Abuse
- Sexual Exploitation
- Harmful Practices
- Alternative Care
- Education & Play

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

NICCY
Promoting the Rights of Children & Young People
The Children’s Services Co-operation Act 2015

Requires:

- That the government improves the wellbeing of Children & Young People
- That, when determining the meaning of ‘well-being’, regard is given to relevant provisions of UNCRC;
- That every children’s Authority co-operates with other children’s Authorities and Services providers to contribute to the well-being of children;
The Children’s Services Co-operation Act 2015

Defines well-being as:

- physical and mental health
- the enjoyment of play and leisure
- learning and achievement
- living in safety and with stability
The Children’s Services Co-operation Act 2015

Defines well-being as:

- making a positive contribution to society
- living in a society which respects their rights
- living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not
- economic and environmental well-being

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Promoting the Rights of Children & Young People
The Children’s & Young People’s Strategy

It also requires that there is publication of the:

Children’s & Young Person’s Strategy

‘NI Executive Action Plan for C&YP’ (GC no. 5) outlining:

- Actions to improve well-being of C&YP;
- Monitoring and reporting on progress;
- The pooling of funds and sharing of staff, goods, services, accommodation or other resources.
NI Programme for Government [PfG]

- Currently out for consultation
- 14 Outcomes
- 42 Indicators
- Outcomes based accountability – Making a Difference!
- Should include the Children’s and Young People’s Strategy
"There is no trust more sacred than the one (we) hold with (all) our children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace."

"No one is born a good citizen; .... Rather, (there are) processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline."

Kofi Annan
7th UN Secretary-General
2001 Nobel Peace Prize Winner
2003 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought
I am a citizen of the world!
Sylvia Beach

“The most important thing an institution does is not to prepare a student for a career but for a life as a citizen.”
Frank Newman

Happy Citizens’ Day!