

Partnership Development Branch  
Community Safety Unit  
Department of Justice  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor Millennium House  
17 – 25 Gt Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT2 7AQ

28 May 2014

Dear Sir/Madam

**Code of Practice on Appointment of Independent Members to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships**

Thank you for the invitation to respond to this consultation.

While on this occasion, I will not be providing a detailed response, however, in considering the issues addressed in the consultation, I would urge the Department of Justice to take account of the four guiding principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). 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 the Convention. The UNCRC provides the overarching framework which guides NICCY's work. The principles are:

- **Article 2:** 'Children shall not be discriminated against and shall have equal access to all articles in the UNCRC'. This means every child within a jurisdiction should be able to enjoy the provisions and protections enshrined in law, policy and practice, without discrimination of any kind and irrespective of their or their parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- **Article 3:** 'All decisions taken which affect children's lives should be taken in the child's best interests'. Essentially, in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration.'
- **Article 6:** 'All children have the right to life and to the fullest level of development'. The rights contained in this article are linked to an enjoyment of the 'highest attainable standard' of health and living and to specific issues including child protection, poverty and care.
- **Article 12:** 'Children have the right to have their voices heard in all matters concerning them'. This article asserts that 'States shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity'. Children and young people should therefore be afforded genuine opportunities to participate in decision making in relation to matters affecting their lives.

Additionally, as two of the key objectives for DPCSP/PCSPs are to improve community confidence in policing through:

1. Ensuring that policing delivery reflects the involvement, views and priorities of local communities; and
2. Ensuring effective engagement with the police and the local community, with specific emphasis on engagement with disadvantaged communities and young people....

...I would urge the Department of Justice to take account of the following issues relevant to children and young people:

- With the understanding that membership of the DPCSP or PCSP should, as far as practicable, be representative of the district (section 3.36), prior to recruitment, I recommend that each DPCSP/PCSP carry out a gap analysis to help target specific groups.
- With regard to recruitment (section 3.13), I welcome the inclusion of youth groups as an example of a group to be targeted in this regard. However, given that the lower age limit for DPSCP/PCSP membership is 16 years, I recommend those target areas are expanded to include schools, further education colleges and universities which would traditionally host a larger number of young people on a daily basis.
- Training should be provided to DPCSP/PCSPs and those agencies represented on them to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the pertinent issues concerning young people and policing, and their responsibilities in preparing to work with young people in disadvantaged communities as highlighted above, including the use of a recognised participation methodology.

I would strongly advise that the key articles from the UNCRC and the above issues pertaining to children and young people inform Department of Justice's decision-making in respect of all matters arising in the Code of Practice on Appointment of Independent Members to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, which may impact directly or indirectly on children and young people.

Yours sincerely



Patricia Lewsley-Mooney  
Commissioner