

PARTICIPATION

WHAT DOES THE UNCRC SAY?

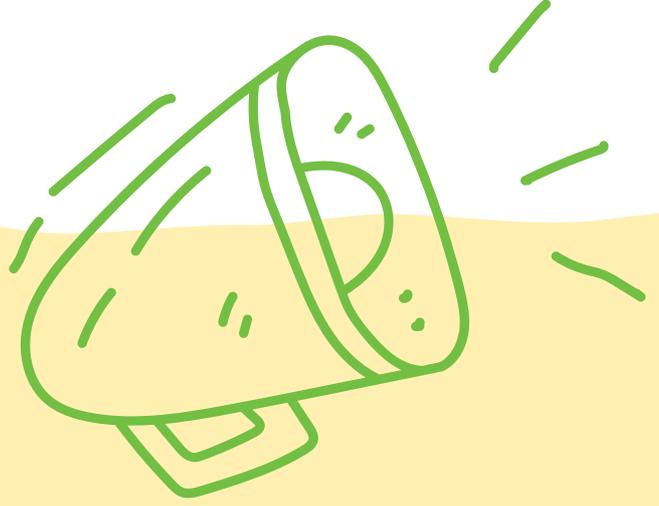
ARTICLE 12:
RIGHT TO HAVE A SAY
IN DECISIONS
AFFECTING THEM AND
TO HAVE THIS
LISTENED TO AND
TAKEN SERIOUSLY

ARTICLE 13:
RIGHT TO SHARE
FREELY WITH OTHERS
WHAT THEY LEARN,
THINK AND FEEL,
UNLESS IT HARMS
OTHER PEOPLE

ARTICLES 14
(FREEDOM OF
THOUGHT AND
RELIGION), **15**
(SETTING UP OR
JOINING GROUPS),
17 (ACCESS TO
INFORMATION) ARE
ALSO IMPORTANT



WHATS GOING ON IN NI?



- Participation is more than just an opportunity for children and young people to share their thoughts but it is an opportunity for them to have a **meaningful say in decisions that affect their lives**. Children and young people are experts in their own lives and it is important that their views and experiences are taken in to account to improve services and a sense of belonging with in their society.
- Children and young people should be **taught about their rights**. Currently in Northern Ireland there are low levels understanding of what the UNCRC is and what that means for children and young people. It is important that awareness levels are improved so that children and young people can participate meaningfully.
- NICCY is delighted to see the **Northern Ireland Youth Assembly** being set up, however the lack of functioning government at Stormont means these young people are not able to question decision makers on behalf of the others they represent.
- The Department of Education's plans to set up a **participation structure** across schools and youth work settings has not yet been realised. There is also a **lack of consistency in how school councils** are delivered and no way of evaluating the benefits these bring to schools.
- While government has shown good intentions to support children and young people to participate in decision making meaningfully, this has been done inconsistently. We still see some examples where the **consultation process is complicated** and causes a barrier to participation. There is also a **lack of feedback** to children and young people after they have taken part in consultations.



WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENT DO NOW?



Fund and roll out the Participation in Decision Making initiative. Make sure all public bodies know how they can **support meaningful participation** of children and young people.



Make sure school councils are the **same quality across all schools** by the Department of Education setting standards and checking they are working during school inspections.



When government is making decisions, they should make sure they **give enough time** for children and young people to be asked their views. They should also make easy read documents and feedback methods.



Train all adults working in services that impact children and young people to make sure they know what they have to do to **facilitate participation** in their organisations.



Support the NI Youth Assembly to play an active role in all parts of the NI Assembly, empowering Youth Assembly members to **challenge and question the workings and decisions** of our government.