

# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE



# THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NICCY – AN OFFICIAL'S PERSPECTIVE

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# CONTEXT

- **A time of excitement** - devolution and a new NI Assembly
- **A new Department** – Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister
- **The Human Rights Act 1998**
  - Coming into force Oct 2000
- **A Human Rights Unit established**
  - To promote a culture of rights and responsibilities within government departments;
  - To prepare for implementation of the Human Rights Act in NI
  - Introduced a new ‘lens’ of ‘rights and responsibilities’

# AN ALIGNMENT OF THE PLANETS

- Well developed and influential voluntary and community sector
- The influence of Trond Waage!
- Transition from human rights to children's rights specifically
- Visit to Norway to see it in operation
- **The result:** approval for a Commissioner for Children and Young People and a 10 year Strategy

# TAKING IT FORWARD

- **Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003**
  - Order in Council made at Westminster
  - Office created to 'safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people'
- **Issues**
  - Extent of the powers given
  - Inclusion of non-devolved bodies within remit
- **Consultation**
  - More of a partnership

# MAKING THE APPOINTMENT

- A new role which called for a new process!
- Regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments
- Central involvement of young people
  - Role plays
  - Participated in interview panel
- **The result:** the appointment of Nigel Williams in October 2003
- **10 years on:** I'm proud to be associated with NICCY!