

NICCY Business Plan 2011 – 2012

12th May 2011

BACKGROUND

The Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) was established under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. NICCY is an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM).

The Commissioner's full designated powers took effect from 1 October 2003. The current Commissioner is Patricia Lewsley-Mooney, and she was appointed on 8 January 2007 for a 4 year term. Mrs Lewsley has subsequently been re-appointed for a second term as Commissioner, to act in this role until January 2015.

VISION

NICCY's Vision is:

"For a society in Northern Ireland where all children and young people flourish, are valued and their views are respected."

MISSION

NICCY's Mission is:

"To safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people".

STATUTORY DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE COMMISSIONER

Article 7 of the 2003 Order outlines the duties of the Commissioner as summarised below:

- A. To promote an awareness and understanding of the rights and best interests of children and young persons.
- B. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the rights and welfare of children and young persons.
- C. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for children and young person's by relevant authorities.
- D. To advise government and relevant authorities on matters concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons.
- E. To communicate effectively with children and young persons and their parents and raise awareness of the function and location of the Commissioner and how they can contact her.
- F. To seek the views of children and young persons in exercising her functions.
- G. To make the services of the Commissioner available to children and young people in their local area

Articles 8-15 outline the Commissioner's general powers where she can:

- A. Undertake, commission or provide financial or other assistance for, research or educational activities concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons or the exercise of her functions.
- B. Issue guidance on best practice in relation to any matter concerning the rights or best interests of children or young persons.
- C. Conduct investigations as she considers necessary or expedient to meet her duties listed above.
- D. Compile information, provide advice and publish any matter (including research, educational activities, investigations and advice) concerning the rights and best interests of children and young persons.
- E. Make representations or recommendations to any body or person relating to the rights and best interests of children and young persons.
- F. Assist with complaints to relevant authorities.
- G. Bring, intervene in or assist in legal proceedings.

CORPORATE PLAN 2011-14

The Corporate Plan 2011-14 links directly to the statutory duties and powers of the Commissioner for Children and Young People as enshrined within the legislation which established the Commissioner, the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

This plan describes the general policy, legislative and economic framework within which NICCY operates and sets out the key strategic and corporate objectives to be achieved within the 3 year period. These objectives are:

Corporate Objective 1	Raise awareness of children's rights and the functions of the Commissioner amongst children, parents and other stakeholders.
Corporate Objective 2	Review and advise Government on policies, services and legislation relating to children's rights
Corporate Objective 3	Use the Commissioner's powers to challenge breaches of children and young people's rights
Corporate Objective 4	Ascertain the views of children and young people in relation to issues which affect their lives
Corporate Objective 5	Maximise NICCY's impact and corporate performance

BUSINESS PLAN 2011-12

This Business Plan links directly to the Corporate Plan 2011-14. It is a more specific and focused document. As such, it identifies the key mechanisms to be implemented and the key targets to be met during the course of the year. The purpose of the Business Plan is to ensure and clearly demonstrate required progress towards the achievement of the Corporate Plan priority objectives within the appropriate timescale. Progress towards the achievement of these targets and objectives will be monitored closely and reported on throughout the financial year.

This Business Plan will be supported by more detailed departmental plans and by individual work plans/individual development plans, which together assists staff to understand NICCY's overall corporate and business objectives and the role that each plays in contributing to NICCY safeguarding and promoting the rights and best interests of children and young people.

RESOURCE ASSUMPTIONS

This Business Plan has been prepared on the basis of the assumptions that it will be delivered within NICCY's approved staffing levels and resources as provided via Grant-in-Aid from OFMDFM. The Commissioner's annual budget for 2011- 12 is £1,719,000.

NICCY recognises the strategic importance of the involvement of children and young people in all aspects of its business.

Children and young people's involvement and participation is embedded throughout each of the corporate and business objectives.

NICCY acknowledges the requirement for this plan to be flexible to take account of changing priorities and circumstances, both from the internal and external environment. This plan will also be flexible in taking account of any decisions emanating from the current Review of Arms Length Bodies.

Business Objective Number 1: Raise awareness of children's rights and the functions of the Commissioner amongst children, parents and other stakeholders.	
Actions	Outputs/outcomes
1.1 Establish baseline information to assess stakeholder awareness in order to produce corporate stakeholder and engagement plan.	Baseline awareness levels analysed and project plans produced in Year 1 to target, improve and measure key stakeholders awareness over corporate plan period (3 years).
1.2 Deliver an awareness raising programme to key stakeholders	Three year engagement project plans produced and signed off for 5 key stakeholder groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people • Parents • Media • Politicians • NGOs and others
	Launch first Participation Awards to celebrate best practice by government departments and agencies.
	Develop online UNCRC Resources Achieve a 5% (526) increase in web traffic through stakeholders accessing new online UNCRC resources.
	Seek to strengthen children's rights internationally where such changes affect legislation, policy and practice in Northern Ireland through ENOC and BINOCC membership and host Annual BINOCC conference.
1.3 Build capacity of key government representatives (including children's champions and key civil servants) to effectively implement the UNCRC.	Commission guidance document on producing Child Rights compliant policies and strategies to complement the OFMDFM 'A Practical Guide to Policymaking in Northern Ireland'. This document will then provide policy makers within government with guidance in this policy area.

Business Objective Number 1: Raise awareness of children's rights and the functions of the Commissioner amongst children, parents and other stakeholders.	
Actions	Outputs/outcomes
1.4 Build capacity of service delivery organisations on the effective implementation of the UNCRC.	Baseline data gathered for the delivery of the programme in Year 2. Deliver Train the Trainers programme to teacher training colleges and universities.
1.5 Deliver a programme to members of the legal community on the functionality of the legal team.	Deliver training on NICCY's legal functions to law students and legal professionals via university and PILs events. CPD event held.

Business Objective Number 2 : Review and advise Government on policies, services and legislation relating to children's rights and best interests.	
Actions	Outputs/outcomes
2.1 Monitor and advise the Executive and the Assembly on the development of the Programme for Government (PfG) and policies, services and legislation relating to children's rights and best interests.	Advice papers produced for, and communicated to, each Department on priority policy areas relating to children's rights and best interests.
	Meetings held with key Executive Ministers, MLAs and Committees to advise on the development of the Programme for Government.
	Policy advice proactively provided to NICCY's priority Departments (DE, OFMDFM, DHSSPS and DOJ) and ongoing liaison established with Departmental officials. This will include the publication of a report on 'Barriers to Effective Government Delivery for Children in NI'.
	Following finalisation of the Programme for Government, systems developed for monitoring Departmental delivery for children as per their respective commitments. These will be communicated to NICCY's target Departments.
2.2 Initiate and pilot budget analysis of government expenditure to monitor extent of current provision and impact of cuts on children.	Expert advice commissioned and produced to enable budget analysis as required.
	Develop plans to monitor expenditure on children in Years 2 and 3.
	Commission Child Rights Impact Analysis of Welfare Reform Bill.
	Commission paper on parity principle and its relevance to Welfare Reform Bill.
2.3 Produce research reports on critical child rights issues and use these to inform policy development.	Commission report on unaccompanied, asylum seeking/refugee children in Northern Ireland. Project underway.
	Commission report on interventions in youth justice. Project underway.
	Commission report analysing Case Management Reviews and Action Plans. Project underway.

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Actions	Outputs/outcomes
2.4 Work with BINOCC colleagues to produce mid-term report to UK Governments on progress in implementing Concluding Observations in a number of key areas.	Contribute NI data to, and write sections for, BINOCC mid-term report and produce accompanying support material to engage C&YP in the UN reporting process.
	Report communicated widely including to NI Executive to inform governments of our assessment of their delivery against the 2008 Concluding Observations.

Business Objective Number 3 : Use the Commissioner's powers to challenge breaches of children and young people's rights.	
Actions	Outputs/outcomes
3.1 Scope child rights' abuses to inform SMT decision-making on areas for potential investigations	Produce a situational analysis on transitions to adult services for young people with learning disabilities produced.
	Produce a situational analysis, on special educational needs.
3.2 Identify gaps in service provision or legal loopholes through casework.	Support parents, children and young people in upholding their rights in line with business objectives, through our casework function.
	Intervene, where appropriate, in legal cases which concern children's rights.
	Take strategic legal cases, where appropriate, to highlight and invoke challenge.
3.3 Targeted legal workshops/complaints clinics with marginalised children to ascertain where they feel their rights are not being met and how they feel they should be addressed.	Evaluate outreach clinics held in Year 1.
	Hold further workshops.
	Complaints actioned through casework department and possible legal challenges as a result of outreach clinics.

Business Objective Number 4 : Ascertain the views of children and young people in relation to issues which affect their lives.	
Actions	Outputs/outcomes
4.1 Views of children and young people ascertained to inform relevant Business Plan actions/ priorities.	The work of NICCY is informed by children and young people, including the work of the NICCY Youth Panel.
	Review how children and young people are involved in NICCY's work and functions and use recommendations to inform future practice.
4.2 Undertake a participatory project gathering children's views on one key issue.	Project plans prepared and authorised.

Business Objective Number 5: Maximise NICCY's impact and corporate performance.	
Actions	Outputs/outcomes
5.1 Measurably improve the effectiveness of organisational systems, policies and procedures to support enhanced business performance.	<p>Develop an improved organisational Corporate Governance framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure robust governance systems are in place • Review and revise the management statement and financial memorandum (MSFM) as required • Produce a Scheme of delegation <p>Audit standards of at least satisfactory assurance are maintained.</p>
	<p>Accurately monitor and evaluate the impact of NICCY's work.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation systems established and agreed with Dept, and staff trained in using them.</p>
	<p>Report on NICCYs annual performance and establish plans for Year 2 of the corporate plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce an annual report and accounts and lay before the NI assembly
	<p>Review engagement through NGO and other forums and produce/agree MOUs/protocols where appropriate</p>