

Play is Not a Luxury it is a Right



Koulla Yiasouma NI Commissioner for Children and Young People



Playboard Conference, 26th November 2015

**We all had a playroom
growing up. It was
called "outside."**



NI COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- “Safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young persons” in Northern Ireland (Article 5)
- Have regard to “any relevant provision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child”(Article 6)

**The Commissioner for Children and Young People
(NI) Order 2003**



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Key Departments and Policy Issues

“The Commissioner shall keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services” **(Article 7)**

- Key Priorities
 - Education Inequalities
 - Child Poverty
 - Adolescent mental health and well-being
- Reviewing core work on children
- Implementation of children’s rights

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

“The child has a right to rest, leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities”

Article 31

Definition of Play:

“any behaviour, activity or process initiated, controlled and structured by children themselves; it takes place whenever and wherever opportunities arise”

General comment 17



**My Mum said
“go and play outside”**

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

“with the sole exception of Wales, the right to play and leisure is not fully enjoyed by all children in the State party”, calling upon the government “to strengthen its efforts to guarantee the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts”

Concluding Observations, 2008

Discrimination of Children and Young People

- 85% believe that they are judged negatively because of their age
- 87% - have personally experienced discrimination because of their age
- 59% told to move on when standing outside with friends
- 67% of young people frequently experience age-related discrimination in shops
- 79% of young people feel that the media portrayal of young people is mostly negative

YLT, 2010



PLAYING OUT

OR PLAYING UP?

Do you know where your child is?



Policing & Community
Safety Partnership

making Belfast safer

www.belfastcity.gov.uk/pcsp

‘angry’ ‘annoyed’ ‘awkward’

‘bad’ ‘confused’

‘disrespected’ ‘EMBARRASSED’

‘frustrated’ ‘hurt’

‘insignificant’ ‘misjudged’ ‘sad’

‘un-trusted’ ‘uncomfortable’

‘unwanted’

‘unwelcome’ ‘upset’ ‘victimised’

‘worried’ ‘worthless’

Local Government Act (NI) 2014

“.... a particular responsibility to encourage and promote the role that can be played by children and young people in community planning. The Community Planning Partnership should seek to do this through reference to the structure set out in the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People’s (NICCY) proposal for a Northern Ireland regional model of engagement. The Partnership should also consider an appropriate method of engagement to involve children and young people and should use a mechanism such as youth forums or other similar arrangements.”

Community Planning Guidance, (section 6.8)

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

“..... imposes on States Parties the specific and continuing obligation, even where resources are inadequate, to ‘strive to ensure the widest possible enjoyment of the relevant rights under the prevailing circumstances.’ No regressive measures in relation to the article 31 rights are permitted.”

General Comment No.17

Age Discrimination Legislation

The Commissioner may issue guidance and provide advice and information on any matter concerning the best interest of children and young persons

(Articles 7 and 8)

“We made a written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 19 February 2015 announcing our decision to bring forward legislative proposals to prohibit unfair age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services. The proposed legislation will apply to those aged 16 and over.”

Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness, April 2015

Your Voice Matters

“There’s nothing really to do here except the youth forum and it’s only on once a month. Unless you like doing sports but I don’t so I mostly just talk to friends on the internet.”

Another young person felt that, if they had not been part of an advocacy group, they would know nothing about children’s right to play, as it is not promoted in schools.

CHILDHOOD is a state of mind which ends
the moment a PUDDLE is first viewed as
an OBSTACLE instead of an OPPORTUNITY



**Northern Ireland Commissioner
for Children and Young People**

Thank you

NICCY
PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF
CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE