

# NICCY

northern ireland commissioner  
for children and young people

Barney Mc  
Neany

Chief  
Executive

## Professional Association of Teachers Conference



**We must all hang  
together,  
or assuredly, we shall  
all hang separately**

**Benjamin Franklin**



The key elements in the art of working together are how to deal with **change**, how to deal with **conflict**, and how to reach our **potential**...the needs of the team are best met when we meet the **needs of individuals**

Max DePree



# Acknowledgement

- Recognition of the demands on you;
- Recognition of the vulnerability & marginalisation of some of the children and young people you work with and the personal and organisational difficulties & challenges this can bring



# Agenda

- What is NICCY and what do we do?
- **Agent of Change Role**
  - With individual children and young people
  - As an agent of systemic change
  - As a challenge to Government
- Key Outcomes
- Challenges



# What is NICCY?

**Patricia Lewsley**

**Commissioner for  
Children and Young  
People (Northern  
Ireland) Order 2003**

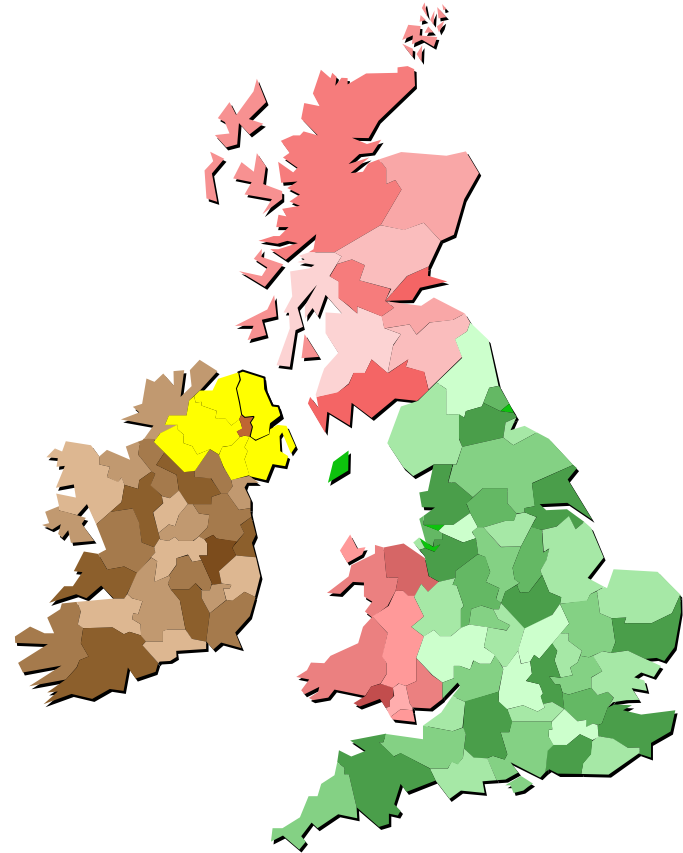


**HRI UNCRC**



# Context

- 500,000 children
- 30 years of conflict
- Divided society
- 1 of 4 Commissioners in UK and Ombudsman in ROI



# Principal Aim?

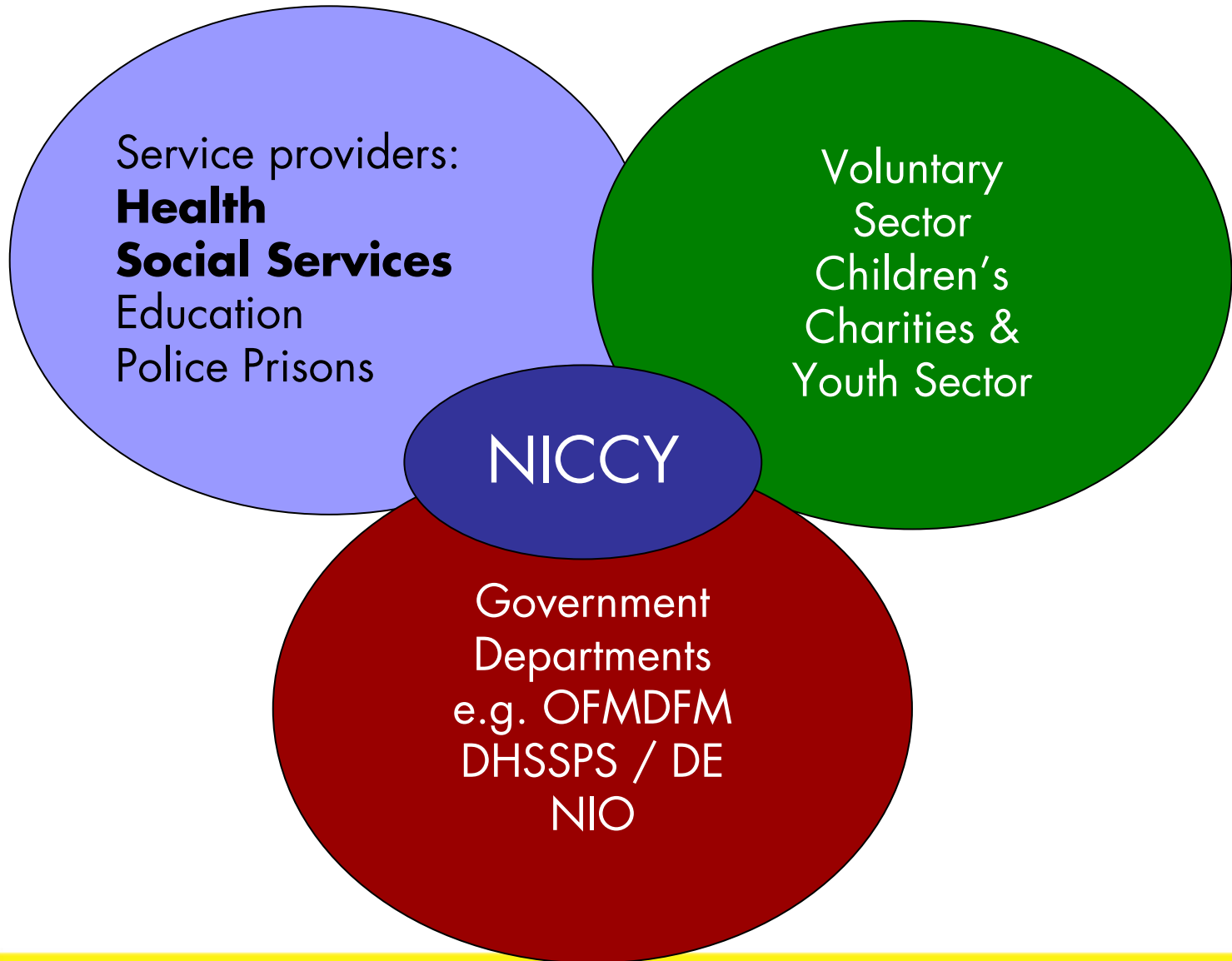
- **“Safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people”**



# Values

- **Work with others in a collaborative and co-operative manner but, where this proves ineffective, to be prepared to use the full range of our powers to bring about change;**
- **Be effective, efficient and an organisation that is accountable and based on clear standards;**
- **Base our work on objective evidence and research;**
- **Value and care for staff, invest in our people and to be a family friendly organisation.**





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in association with



A boy not getting a say in a  
Conversation.

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

"I hope you can do something but if not, it's okay. But remember, I know we're just kids but we live in this world too. And if we don't say anything about it, who will?" (Girl, aged 10)

Research Commissioned by the  
Northern Ireland Commissioner for  
Children and Young People:  
2004

### Research Team

Kilkelly, U; Kilpatrick, R; Lundy,  
L; Moore, L, Scraton, P; Davey,  
C; Dwyer, C; McAlister, S.



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# Scope of responsibilities

- all children and young people in society – ages 0 to 18 or 21.
- particular communities – mental health of YPs, special needs, sick, carers, looked after children, in youth justice system...
- individuals – with particular concerns



# BINOCC & ENOC

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF OMBUDSMEN FOR CHILDREN  
WWW.OMBUDSNET.ORG

Colleague  
Commissioners  
and Ombudsmen  
in the UK, Ireland  
and Europe

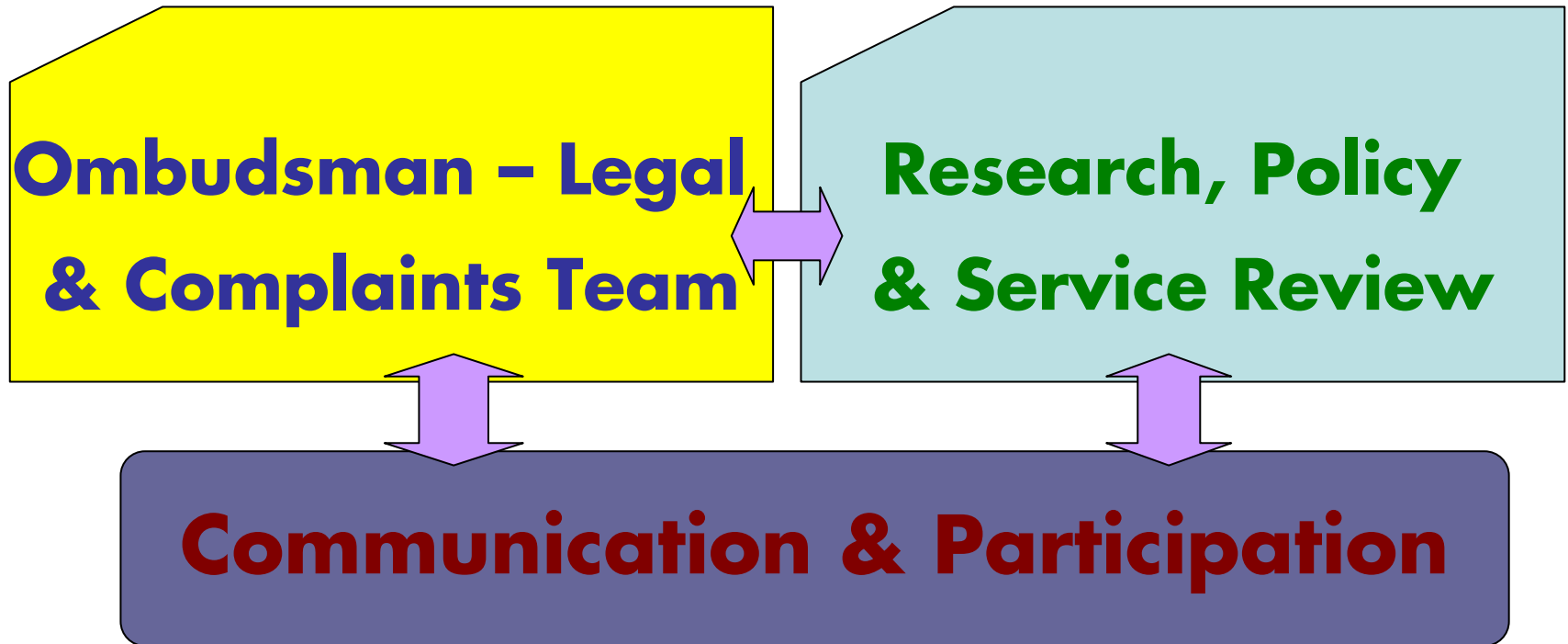


The screenshot shows the BINOCC website homepage. At the top, the BINOCC logo is displayed in a stylized, bubbly font. Below the logo, the text reads "British and Irish Network of Ombudsmen and Children's Commissioners". A navigation bar includes links for "Home", "News", and "Contact details". The main content area features a heading: "BINOCC is the British and Irish Network of Ombudsmen and Children's Commissioners". Below this, a paragraph states: "It is a sub-committee of ENOC - the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children, but also meets independently." A section titled "BINOCC members are:" is partially visible. On the right side of the page, there are three logos: the "Office of the Children's Commissioner", the "ombudsman for children : de leanaí", and the "NICCY northern ireland commissioner for children and young people".



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# Form follows Functions



# Powers



- Act for individuals
- General Review
- Review of Whistle blowing & inspection
- Formal Investigation
- Right of entry
- Right to obtain documents
- Right to call witnesses
- Power to take legal action



# Outcomes?

## Policy or Personal?

- Policy
  - Healthy
  - Enjoying, Learning and Achieving
  - Economic and Env. Well-being
  - Contributing positively to society
  - Safety and Stability
- Living in a society which respects their rights
- Personal
  - Being the best we can be
  - Know about and be able to act on my rights & to respect those of others
  - Be listened to and have my opinion valued
  - Be treated with respect and dignity



# Outcomes; A rights based approach

- The UNCRC – our promise to children and young people
- Article 12 – The right to have and express an opinion and to be listened to
  - Advocacy
  - Complaints
  - Involvement in planning their lives and future



# Case examples

- Anne-Marie (17)
- Looked after by Trust, referred by politician as “out of control and in need of secure accom.”; developed relationship with Anne-Marie; independent investigation of Trust’s actions; advocated for her with Trust and Courts; resisted unwarranted input from politician & Mum; complaint to minister; continued to encourage her and Trust; helped find housing; new baby and coping well....
- John (11)
- Statement of special educational needs; autism and related communication difficulties; lack of proper assessment; no provision for communication needs; poverty; anxiety of parent with authority; complex family relationships & needs of mother not assessed; advocacy with school, education department and police; provision of S&LT and OT...



# What children and young people say to us?

- "I would be dead if it wasn't for NICCY" Zoe (17)
- "Why does no one else listen?" Ashley (14)
- **"Is one of us going to have to be killed before they change? Siobhan" (16)**

**Northern Ireland does not listen to children, or worse affords them only minimalist, tokenistic opportunities to participate in decisions made about them.. Not being consulted is the single most important issue to children and young people in Northern Ireland**

**QUB Research 2004**



# The need for systemic change

- Speech and Language Therapy Review
- **Vetting**
- Mental Health Review & Message to Minister
- Aspergers Research
- Budget for Children's Services
- **School Transport**
- Bullying Research and Guidance



# Systemic Change

- Unallocated child protection cases
- Children and young people funding package
- Integrated Early Years Package
- Play
- School Transport



# Systemic Status Quo

- Family Support and early intervention
- Mental Health
- Joined up policy and services
- S&LT
- Pace of change.... The mills of God



# Our key challenges.

- **The New Dispensation**
- **Our New Commissioner**
- **The Next Corporate plan**
- **Development of work with colleagues East – West & North – South**
- **Keep Advocating and Keep Listening**



# All ears and no teeth?

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>WALES</b>	<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>	<b>SCOTLAND</b>	<b>ENGLAND</b>
Review adequacy and effectiveness of services to children?	✓	✓	✓	X
Assist individual Children?	✓	✓	X	X
Investigation of service providers – general	✓	✓	✓	X
Formal Investigation	✓	✓	✓	X



# Final Quote

- What's the definition of madness?
- To do the same thing over and over again and each time expect a different result
- Albert Einstein

