Section C: Feedback from workshops with civic society representatives and NICCY Youth Panel

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Contents  |  |
| Introduction  | 4 |
| Outcome 1: Physical and Mental Health  | 6 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshops | 6 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop  | 16 |
| Outcome 2: The enjoyment of play and leisure  | 23 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshop | 23 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop | 31 |
| Outcome 3: Learning and Achieving  | 38 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshop | 38 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop | 46 |
| Outcome 4: Living in Safety and with Stability | 53 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshop | 53 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop  | 58 |
| Outcome 5: Economic and Environmental Well-Being  | 64 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshop | 64 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop  | 68 |
| Outcome 6: Making a Positive Contribution to Society | 76 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshop | 76 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop  | 81 |
| Outcome 7: Living in a Society which Respects their Rights  | 87 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshop | 87 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop  | 92  |
| Outcome 8: Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations | 94 |
| Feedback from Civic Society Workshop  | 94 |
| Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop  | 99 |
| Children and Young Person’s Strategy – Survey Responses  | 103 |

Introduction

This section of the report contains feedback from workshops to gather views on the content of the Children and Young people’s Strategy held by NICCY over three days in May 2016. The first two, on 4 and 5 May, involved around 80 representatives from civic society organisations, largely NGOs. The third day of workshops, held on 15 May, involved around 40 young people from the Commissioner’s advisory Youth Panel.

The workshops were structured around the eight well-being measures set out in Section 1 of the Children’s Services Cooperation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015:

1. Physical and mental health;
2. The enjoyment of play and leisure;
3. Learning and achievement;
4. Living in safety and with stability;
5. Economic and environmental wellbeing;
6. The making by them of a positive contribution to society;
7. Living in a society which respects their rights; and
8. Living in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted between persons who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share that characteristic.

The civic society workshops were held over two days, with participants choosing from two of four workshops each day. This allowed two hours to discuss the main issues that they felt needed to be addressed under the relevant well-being outcome of the Children and young person’s strategy. At the end of each workshop, the participants were asked to prioritise three areas that they felt were the most important for the Strategy to address.

The discussions with the youth panel were held over one day, and the young people were assigned to four workshops out of eight, and although they had been offered a choice in advance most were content that they would be randomly assigned workshops. In each workshop, after a brief presentation on the outcome, the young people discussed what they felt the main issues were that needed to be addressed under the outcome in the Children and young person’s strategy and, as in the civic society workshops, then each identified their top three priority areas on post-it notes. In addition to this the young people were also provided with sheets to jot down any additional points they wanted to make in relation to the workshops they had attended or, indeed the four workshops they were not able to attend.

People who were unable to attend the Civic Society workshops were invited to provide feedback on the development of the strategy through an online survey, using survey monkey. There were six responses returned. A summary of the responses from the survey are outlined below and an anonymised copy of each survey response is available at Appendix 3.

Outcome 1: Physical and Mental Health

Feedback from Civic Society Workshops

Civic Society ‘Physical and Mental Health’ Workshops: Summary of Discussion

**Transitions**

* Transition from children’s services to adult services – physical health – in some cases this can be as young as 14 yr olds on adult wards / services. The young person involved often finds this transition terrifying but is embarrassed to say – can have knock on effect on relationships with parents.
* Lack of transition planning – how will Children and young person’s strategy recognise the 2 groups of young people falling into transitional groups – how can they support them?
* Being able to access services when coming up to 18 yrs and becoming an adult. Care leavers are isolated but still require services, but may not be able or ready for adult services. Transitions need to be in there. Agency thresholds are not enough or too many.
* It was also noted that transitions to adult services can take away from established relationships having a detrimental effect.

**Relationships**

* Relationships with young people vital in building trust. ‘Transforming your care’ was supposed to do this however not implemented correctly.
* This needs to be taken into consideration when developing services for young people – relationships often need to be established before a young people can feel able to open up about health issues.

**Specific groups / vulnerabilities**

* Government should focus on inequality of services in rural areas / looked after children. Need for consistency in provision of services.
* Being LAC.
* Highlight mental health and emotional well being ignored at regular health meetings, find they talk about day to day issues rather than this.
* Highlighted process can be slow with young people who are from more deprived areas / taking drugs and getting them to visit a GP can be a huge undertaking never mind anything else.
* Need to recognise obstacles from those who are most at need for instance LGBT.

**Early Intervention**

* Family Hubs can be / are being used as early intervention mechanism – as these are community based they can understand the needs of those living in the community.
* Long waiting lists – sometimes by the time they are seen their condition has worsened. Again highlighted need for early intervention.
* GPs using family hub to fast track services – again early intervention.
* Early intervention needed, missing so much of childhood and the futures is none existent.

**Schools**

* Young people not being diagnosed – schools ignore needs until there is a statement in place. They are not being supported before that point. Need to see the child first without a label.
* Young people sometimes feel counselling is a tick box exercise with no investment / relationship with teacher.

**Awarness / Stigma**

* Stigma of mental health raised as a barrier to accessing help.
* Help seeking behaviour.
* Some young people lack the skills to talk about their health or engage effectively. This can sometimes be as a result of trauma on young people – in ‘flight, fight or freeze’ mode.
* Social acceptance about issues – how do we go about it?

**Access to Services**

* Mental Health assessments – Long waiting times – can undermine young people worth – may think won’t bother next time.
* PIP’s says 80 per cent increase of adolescents in last 6 months.
* Children & young people working within a system set up by adults- 'adult world'.
* Expected to access adult services but don’t feel capable of doing this. Need for services to be paced to suit young people, building relationships key.
* Needs to be a link between identified need and access to services.
* Need for appropriate services for appropriate age groups.
* Suggestion for using Apps to reach young people with information, can be accessed in private so no stigma.
* Lack of communication between systems.
* Linking young people into primary care services.
* More communication within depts – when people leave job, finding no handover re previous contact with young people.
* Lack of communication – confusion within services. Some are not picking up on needs.
* Not always good experience of GPs when faced with mental health issues.
* Lack of joined up approach. Childs health doesn’t sit in a vacuum but in a family and society and they need to get all they can.
* It needs to be child centred – yes – but family centred too.
* Some can’t access CAMHS or meet the threshold if not suicidal. A need is a need.
* How are services coordinated? How do we cascade it down to the family and person? Challenge is a named key worker. In Scotland the child has a named statutory person as a focal point.
* Agencies need to work together.
* How do we stop postcode lottery? Health and Education is fragmented in a small jurisdiction.
* We know what works, we have asked them before – advocacy, listens to me, needs times, workers commitment. How we allow time and empower them to do it. It happens in some areas and trusts. Why can you not get some trusts and not others to do it?
* Child’s right to health should not be a hierarchy or not because child hasn’t reached a threshold.
* Culture of Disability – it is so transfixed on what the person can’t do- has anyone explained their feelings and missed the young people.
* ADD/ ADHD hidden disability - how is this measured as an outcome? How are they being heard and involved?
* Children and young people with communication difficulties suppress emotions because they feel they are a burden to the family and society and this leads to stress in the family. We are NOT listening to them. They have a right to have a say- just a questionnaire sent out is not good enough particularly in rural areas. Article 12 + 13 in a way that suits them and enables them. People are not tuned into it.
* Drug / Alcohol – rehabilitation services. Noted that excessive drug or alcohol abuse is usually used to cover up underlying issues and it may be that a young people needs to access 2 different services rather than dealing with 1 issue while another deteriorates.
* Also local solutions in local areas, but local agencies can come in to play.
* Everything should link.
* Need a simple process and trust in professionals.
* Support - not just presenting issue, what is the main need? Focusing, evolving naturally not just presenting need.
* Professional inter-disciplinary power structures.

**Service Gaps**

* Extending services to 21 yrs
* Lack of services for young mothers – those suffering post natal depression.
* Infant mental health – gap in services provision.
* Drug / Alcohol – rehabilitation services. Noted that excessive drug or alcohol abuse is usually used to cover up underlying issues and it may be that a young people needs to access 2 different services rather than dealing with 1 issue while another deteriorates\*.
* Eating disorders – lack of support in NI.
* Young people with disabilities – lack of skills / knowledge for dealing with this group of young people and as a result lack of services or being excluded from services.
* Young people coming out of prison back into community – lack of services – need more support.
* Beginning with health visitors – need a reinvention again and a bit more hands on. Not cut or withdrawn. Key worker needs to be empowered enough to be an advocate. What is the follow up? Not just a card and they don’t turn up.
* Need research into mental and physical health.
* Noted the impact on families incl. siblings when travelling for services.
* Repatriation of deceased children & young people – more support services need to be in place.

**Professional Skills / Training**

* Suicidal young people attending A&E – staff unaware of guidelines for those who present as suicidal and are made to wait in the main waiting area. More training / awareness required.
* Need to engage with children & young people – health professionals to be trained in engaging with this group.
* Need for expertise brought into primary care and account taken for priorities.
* There are good workers out there who are holding families together. Need to tap into what makes their delivery good.
* Teachers – no funding for events so they don’t attend. There needs to be funding. Funding needs to be resourced and to provide this at all levels. Woman’s aid example of 900 teachers given DE funding in Primary Schools.
* Resource – generic training package. Teacher Training days - but need to also have a whole school approach.
* Young people with disabilities – lack of skills / knowledge for dealing with this group of young people and as a result lack of services or being excluded from services.

**Causes**

* Poor parental mental health can have an impact on children & young people.
* Young fathers who have no access to children, finding not encouraged to be involved, this can have detrimental effect and high level of suicide among these groups of young people.
* Poverty impact on both mental and physical health – noted referrals to food banks spiked.
* Link between mental health and offending and post traumatic experiences which have not been dealt with i.e. abuse or death.
* It was highlighted that low self esteem is a key factor of young people suffering from mental health problems.
* Correlation between education and mental health.
* Experience with other family members accessing services may influence perceptions.
* Impacted by parental mental health and can affect hidden groups of young people for example young carers, under 16’s, hidden carers who are unofficial and are invisible.

**Counselling**

* Young people not always responsive to counselling – other interactive methods such as horse riding / go karting can be a way of helping young people open up.
* The venue for counselling was also noted as a barrier as young people found being called out of the classroom for counselling embarrassing.

**Delivering on Children and young person’s strategy**

* UNCRC and UNCRPD – Disability needs to be specifically mentioned – all relevant UNCRPD are specially mentioned.
* Senior responsible officer, (children’s champion etc) hopefully one for children that will look across all departments.
* Structure – the sub groups and action plans.
* Where action plans should sit?
* How many strategies and action plans do we write?
* All should be using one action plan in the top structure. They will be others down the structure in more detail in delivery.
* How many from the statutory services can do this? They lag behind because of specific remits and also what the legalisation says they MUST do. Issues for those who work in Statutory agencies that are being reviewed and VES impact.
* Statutory has shrunk to a critical level -the expertise and knowledge.
* Government needs to not to take a small view but a bigger picture.
* There is a gap between departments and agencies.
* Decision making at the top empowering decision making at the bottom.
* Cost associated with decisions.
* Top - strategy measures linked at strategy level.
* Middle- ensure cooperation in working.
* Overly complex structures – history – need this act – huge communication piece across government, agencies, professionals, families, children.
* Accountable – What would be the requirements?
* Recognition – of the issues that impacts on all areas.
* Needs – recognised – Rights need recognised – holistic and hard to measure – executive is where buck has to stop not services.
* Strategy is now holding executive to account. It is a tool.
* Strategy needs to push down and push up.
* Down South – couldn’t believe we need needed an ACT to make us cooperate.
* Scotland has also an ACT.
* How do we use the ACT to do this?

**Outcomes**

* Meaningful measurement.
* Do we have the buy in at all the levels? How does good practice filter down? Not just a tick box, it is not just a questionnaire but qualitative dimensions – research imperative. Do we measure less and measure better? Almost a blame culture so we have a tick box. Educate those who are reporting.
* Measure something meaningful – but need to tell us what it is and how?
* Certain groups inform consultations, but are we engaging across the range? How do we make indicators so we find out? Questionnaires don’t work with all, we need a range of tools and case studies. What about those under the radar?
* 5 years evidence before putting in service but family needs should work bottom up – no one size fits all- individual needs.

**Role of Voluntary and Community Sector**

* Voluntary sector are good at working together and accountable to funders. Re commissioned to deliver services but reviewed to do work better.
* Voluntary/ Community sector are on the ground, supporting families identifying gaps and needs. Services need to change and adapt.
* Voluntary sector are doing more of the work and the specialised stuff.
* Voluntary/ Community Services can sit around and do this.

Civic Society Workshop: ‘Physical and Mental Health’ Priorities

**Transitions**

* Smooth transition from young person to adult services.
* Transition services.
* Transition- age appropriate services.
* Transition issues- especially lack of advocacy for children and young people with disabilities.
* Better transition in the system- from childhood to teenage years.
* Lack of communication and understanding re: transitions especially in terms of CAT / DAMHS services and CAMHS- also providing more information on NICE guidelines.
* Transitions.
* Mental health- from maternal through to infant, child and adolescent.
* The strategy should include provision for young people transitioning to adult services.
* Lack of continuity, named person that stays with family passed 17 years old. Young people can deliver training in reality they are the experts of their disability. The young person needs involved from the bottom up, not top down approach.
* Reflect specific health needs of children in care and care leavers and address issues of accessing and transitions between services.
* Transgender Young people –Awareness and support, Issues in schooling – e.g. at transition stages, Transition to adult services and Family support.

**Relationships**

* Adding relationship elements to core.
* Relationships are key.
* The main barrier I have faced for advocating for children with learning disabilities is not having enough access or relationship with the professionals as assigned to them e.g. psychiatrists. We bring issues forward a lot and seems like nothing happens until the child experiences something very major / traumatic.

**Specific groups / vulnerabilities**

* Access to universal services for children and young people with disabilities.
* Disability services- lack of funding.
* Mental health to be given higher priority at LAC reviews.
* Reflect specific needs of children in care and care leavers under each aspect of strategy.
* Promote corporate parenting by all departments for children in care and care leavers.
* Trusts active in their corporate parent role in protecting children.

**Early Intervention**

* More funding needed around early intervention services- especially family support around mental health.
* Early intervention.
* Early intervention / prevention – 1st 1001 days- focuses on EI, mortality, smoking, maternal obesity, breast feeding, infant mental health.
* Recognition of equal access and primarily early intervention which can ultimately negate increased need.
* That mental health issues can transcend all children and young people, hence the importance of prevention and early intervention, and role of a range of services, e.g. youth service, family support, pastoral care, etc, etc
* Important of preventive approaches in safeguarding children and young people.

**Schools**

* Need for Government actions or campaigns that address mental health stigma in schools starting at the age of 6 or 7.
* Children with complex needs are educated in special school and have their health needs addressed there. Children with additional needs in mainstream have numerous medical appointments to fit in- Make it easier for families – one clinic, physio, OT, S+LT etc. Not many appointments on morning days.

**Access to Services**

* Access to CAMHS age appropriate services.
* Equality of level of service available throughout country.
* Consistency in provision across NI.
* Waiting Lists for services- mental and physical are too long. Children waiting 6 months and more for child development.
* More resources, staffing needed to reduce waiting lists to ensure young people aged up to 21 don’t fall through the cracks in the system.
* Provision being designed to meet individual needs-not based on labels, waiting lists, diagnosis, thresholds, but what is right for the child.
* Need for more joined up approach across sectors and support agencies.
* Need for families (carers/ parents) of disabled children to access to information, advice and support – one stop shop.
* Support for siblings of disabled children and young people – visibility of issue.
* Learn from good practice, already being undertaken and provide consistency of service delivery in NI.

**Service Gaps**

* Lack of services- teen pregnancy- post natal depression (might be linked to the infant mental health strategy).
* Services across all Gov depts. for children and young people need to be extended to 21 yrs old.
* Safe place to ‘dry out’ so to speak. Impact of drugs is really significant. I can’t emphasis this enough. It is seriously affecting their ability to access and maintain services and to keep a roof over their head.
* Real need to develop a range of services to address drug abuse. Impact of abuse of psycho active substances ( so called ‘legal highs’) on mental and physical health is significant young people need immediate access to drug related support (some sort of pop up services), particularly need for dedicated rehab services.
* support (particularly social care support) for young people leaving custody (higher levels of mental health issues).
* Remember all children including siblings. Follow up.

**Professional Skills / Training**

* Qualification framework developed around family support- giving those in the most contact wider specialist knowledge.
* Highlight the importance of training within the voluntary sector. The relationship between volunteers and children is vital but without proper training it can be hard to support children effectively.

**Causes**

* Impact of poverty (need for child poverty strategy).
* Address causes behind poor mental health of children and young people.
* Consideration of substance misuse and the impact of this on physical and mental health esp. in relation to legal highs.
* Link between obesity and mental health.
* Poverty / inequality population based and system service (consistency standards).
* Recognition of domestic violence as a key issue affecting children and young people throughout NI.
* Impact of domestic violence on children and young people.

**Therapeutic Approaches**

* Recognition of therapeutic benefits of interventions outside of medical model- literature for mental health, opening up conversations.
* Take focus off counselling- more practical support- looser outcomes approach.
* Through stories.
* Enhancing young people’s skills that will help them to develop.
* Understanding the capacity of young people- individual assessment of this as 16 yr old are capable of making their own decision others are not.
* Awareness / Stigma.
* General public awareness on mental health is lacking so when faced with a situation it can be fear lead and unsupportive.
* Important to gather statistics on prevalence of mental health issues among young people in NI.
* Involvement of children and young people and families.
* Consult with young people about the best way to access services.
* Parents and young people are the experts in their own situations, Listen to them, Act for them.
* Children and Young people involvement in feedback as a service user. This can then be used to inform assessment.
* The strategy should acknowledge and reflect the fact that children and young people and their families are experts on issues that impact on their lives and should be asked for their views on all aspects of the strategy.

**Delivering on Children and young person’s strategy**

* Clear frameworks for all to be accountable to (ethics)-To respect autonomy and everyone as their own expert and Awareness of the strategy.
* Linking across other strategies CYSP/ Domestic and sexual violence children and young people sub group.
* Honest and effective way of communicating ways that aren’t working.
* We must have a structure that has transparent accountability as a core principle of monitoring and delivery.
* Executive and departmental buy in and accountability.
* Close working relationship with voluntary sector- Clear structures, Simple processes and Effective measurement framework.
* In the current funding climate, a risk of the strategy being too inspirational. Must be achievable.

**Outcomes**

* Ensuring outcomes are properly measured- to take into account that very simple changes (eg interest in own appearance, speaking out, making friends, smiling, just attending) are huge for the young person.
* Change the paper work, timeframe which is restricting real progress.
* What value are attached to outcomes?
* Outcomes must recognise the slow pace that many children and young people need to move along at.
* Having Childrens Strategy indicators / actions that require co-operation having clear accountability pathway in the Strategy.
* Measure what matters.
* Awareness measure that people know strategy exists.
* Bottom- family/ child having a say and measures needs being met – the best way this could be done. Has to be a prescriptive set of measures.
* Children and young people with disability are ‘visible’ in the Children and Young People’s Strategy.
* Specific measures/ indicators for driving awareness and action about co-operation/ joint working to meet holistic needs.

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Physical and Mental Health’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Funding**

* More funding for children and young people with mental health problems / more awareness raising.
* Better NHS service / shorter waiting lists.
* Better counselling in and out of schools.

**Mental Health Awareness:**

* Promote good mental health within schools.
* Creating awareness in schools and amongst teachers about stress, especially around exams.
* More awareness of mental health provision.
* There is still a stigma attached to mental health – we have to remove the stigma.
* Need to share good practice.

**Role of Schools/Teachers:**

* Better education for teachers about the stress put on y.p because of work levels.
* Schools know there will be exam pressure – how can they ease stress levels.
* Teachers tend to focus on their subject being the most important – this emphasis is therefore put on by each teacher, multiplying the expectations.
* More awareness of bullying and discrimination including sectarianism and racism.
* Schools have an unbalanced system – some schools have good academic services but lack pastoral care (and vice versa). Usually school with high academia has more stress because of focus on getting grades.
* School say they are there for you but maybe just have an Assembly discussion on stress or advise ‘ put your books down and take a walk’.
* Some teachers think that students use stress as an excuse not to study.
* Teachers approaches are making it worse.
* Should teachers be made aware that pupils attend counselling? Maybe but you need to maintain your dignity.
* Teachers don’t understand – don’t realise how big a deal it is. Some joke about it.
* Teachers need training and made aware of impact of stress.

**School counselling:**

* Underfunding of counselling in schools.
* Process of self referral is not good – y.p. are called out of class.
* Counselling needs to be ‘established/mainstreamed’ with the school.
* Being called out of class for counselling is embarrassing.

**SEN:**

* Autism: more skills training doe staff dealing with y.p. with autism.
* Make autism support age specific.
* Better provision for SEN in schools.
* Some classroom assistants do work for (SEN) pupils.
* If support is not provided to pupils with SEN, this may lead to discrimination, intentionally or not.
* There's a lack of autism awareness amongst pupils.
* Teacher need to be able to pick up signals and seek support.

**Physical Disabilities:**

* Access for disabled y.p.in school needs to improve in some schools.
* Young person couldn’t get into most of the classrooms; others had to lift the wheelchair.
* Lack of funding for access renovations – but a new gym could be built.
* Issues with school buses for young people in wheelchairs.
* More funding for ramps, elevator and improving the layout of schools.

**Suggestions:**

* Connect physical and mental health issues, e.g. yoga.
* Don’t punish young people for not doing PE.
* Don’t force young people to do things they can’t or don’t want to.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Physical and Mental Health’ Workshop: Priorities

**Physical Disabilities:**

* Disability access- LGBT issues.
* Disabled access in schools.
* More access for disabled people.
* Accessing schools when have a disability.
* Established equipment to comfort physically disabled people.

**Role of Schools/Teachers:**

* Suicide awareness.
* Stress in school.
* Promote mental health in school.
* Take action in primary school to aid mental health.
* Help pupils control their stress levels.
* Exam stress.
* Stress.
* Bullying.

**Mental Health Awareness:**

* Teachers being able to tell the difference between illness and skiving.
* Teachers should be trained to recognise issues.
* Mental Awareness- teachers and pupils.
* No-one should be forced to do something they don’t think they are capable of.
* Teachers attend courses.
* Helping people with mental and physical health.
* Connecting physical and mental health.
* Connecting physical and mental needs.
* Link between mental and physical.

**School counselling:**

* Counselling needs to be more common and it shouldn’t be in the back of the school in a cramped little room.
* Counselling lists shortened or bring more in.
* Establishing counselling in schools.

**Funding**

* More funding to give services to young people with mental health problems.
* Additional funding for NHS- more staff needed as long waiting hours etc.
* Good quality health care.
* Better NHS support that you should get the help quickly.

**Mental Health Awareness:**

* Giving people the support to be okay with the illness.
* Reducing stigma amongst young people and teachers.
* Stigma that goes with mental health issues.
* Increase peer support.
* Creating awareness.
* Awareness raising as some children don’t know their rights about physical and mental health.
* Health and education not working together.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Physical and Mental Health’ Workshop: Additional Notes

* Autism awareness.
* Suicide awareness.
* Counsellors in school.
* Disability access.
* Discrimination/sectarianism/bullying awareness.
* Connect physical and mental health e.g. yoga.
* Better NHS service.
* Better counselling services – should be encouraged in schools.
* Care (e.g. fostering) – check everyone out.
* Stress in schools (awareness) (exams).
* Mental health section in hospitals (awareness).
* Help for those with autism.
* SEN (schools).
* Raising awareness of bullying.
* Exam stress and pressure.
* Teachers pressure – their subject more important.
* Good quality health care.
* Creating awareness that this is an issue.
* Reduce stigma.
* Promote mental health awareness in school.
* Letting people know more about the mental health sector in hospitals.
* Autism needs.
* Suicide awareness.
* Making it age specific.
* SEN needs (more).
* Disabled access.
* Establish councils in school.
* Raised awareness of sectarianism/bullying.
* Educate teachers.
* The actual amount of school work – too much for junior school pupils/KS3 (as well as KS4)
* Increased support.
* Connecting physical and mental health (i.e. yoga).
* Waiting lists – long lists prevent people especially children from being treated. This stops her from doing PE and being in constant pain for over 18 months.
* Less of a stigma around mental health, so that if someone needs, help, advice or even just someone to talk to they should have access to such services.
* Needs to care more about child’s stress and anxiety levels.
* More funding to support children with mental health problems.
* Awareness raising – some children don’t know their rights.
* Better NHS services – long waiting hours, more staff so additional funding needed.
* Aids/adaptions needed for schools – lifts.
* Physical activity.
* SEN – used more.
* School counselling – better.
* Counselling should be done instead of prescriptions given.
* Funding for mental health.
* Educate teachers and pupils about mental health issues/stress.
* Reduce stigma of mental health.
* SEN care used better.
* Suicide awareness.
* Helping autism.
* Access for disabled people.
* Counselling.
* Bullying –sectarianism.
* Teachers selfish = stress.
* Teachers don’t understand young people’s stress.
* Peer support.
* Awareness – support for disabled people.
* Connect physical and mental health.
* Better healthcare.
* Reduce wait for Counsellors.
* Provide mental health in schools.
* Reduce stigma within social environment.
* Take mental health as seriously as physical.
* Suicide awareness.
* Raising awareness in schools – stress.
* Awareness of available help in schools.
* SEN – Better in school.
* Reduce publicity of self-referral in school.
* Disability access.
* Raise awareness of bullying/discrimination.
* Create a link between mental and physical – yoga in PE class.
* Primary school – children who suffer tend to be put down as problematic and problem gets worse as they progress.
* Family life; communities.
* Article 25, 23, 42.
* School Counsellors .
* Funding for mental health.
* Taken more seriously.
* Wellbeing.
* Ageism – suitable healthcare practice, i.e. for an injection to put you to sleep; they called it a ‘Butterfly’.
* U16 – ASD training better, disability access, classroom assistants do the work.
* Counselling – long list to wait, not age relevant.
* Suicide awareness – class talk, group.
* Teachers – go through courses of awareness along with the students.
* Stigma of getting help.

Outcome 2: The enjoyment of play and leisure

Feedback from Civic Society Workshop

Civic Society ‘Enjoyment of Play and Leisure’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

There was recognition that ‘play and leisure’ has been defined too narrowly to date, and the GC 17 approach of including arts and cultural expression was welcomed. It was felt that the arts were sidelined and ignored at the policy level. In general it was felt that too often the importance of play isn’t recognised and this is reflected in a lack of investment.

**Free play, fixed play, structured play**

It is the right of children to choose how they want to play. Adults focus too much on fixed equipment, and view play provision only as fixed play area playgrounds. Children thus have to be taken to a playground to be allowed to play. In reality, fixed equipment has a very limited period of interest, and prevents children and young people from defining their own play space. Fixed playgrounds can be very sterile environments, designed with the mind of a grown up focused on providing developmentally appropriate play, not the mind of a child.

There was a discussion about structured play, where adults lead organised play. However, it was agreed that there was an important place for this. However, while structural play is not problematic, it was felt that formulaic play is problematic.

It is important to not be too prescriptive in providing play. There can be too much of a focus on outcomes, instead of play for play’s sake. Play can involve adults, or can be child to child. Success is when children can go into whatever suits their needs at that time, and have a choice of what to do. Understanding play as multi–dimensional is very important.

**Communities intolerant of play**

There is a growing intolerance of children playing outside on their own. Too often it is described as ‘anti-social behaviour’. While this is particularly the case when young people are ‘playing’ in communities, it is also the case for children as young as 4 or 5. Often adults appear to believe that a criminal justice response is the correct response to children and young people playing in their communities. There is a need to address this and to build awareness of the importance of play and of tolerance of children playing outside.

**Lack of tolerance of risk**

Children’s play has been extremely restricted due to concerns about risk. In the past, children were allowed to play and roam significant areas, but this is greatly reduced. One participant reported that the area children were typically allowed to roam in the past as around 5-6 miles, while it is now only 50-100metres from home.

Many of the places in which children would have been allowed to play in the past are now considered unsafe/hazardous environments. Children are restricted to areas we deem as safe and playable, and many play environments are lost to children.

Regulators and inspectors are driven by risk rather than what is developmentally appropriate. Policy and compliance issues are driving play into a narrow, cognitively controlled definition, concentrating only on cognitive or academic development approaches. An example was given of Demark, where parents take insurance out for their own children, resulting in no claims, and genuine and controlled risk.

**Play vs education**

At a number of points the discussion highlighted concerns in relation to how a focus on education can impinge on children’s right to play. It was suggested that there is a ‘school-ification’ of early Childhood. There needs to be a ‘massive cultural shift’ to prevent children’s right to play being diminished by a cognitive, curriculum based focus in the early years sector.

Participants were hopeful about the policy lead for children and for childcare moving to DE, but concern remained. It was suggested that, while DE to date had been the ‘Department for Schools’, this was the opportunity to become the ‘Department for Children’.

It was felt that there was too much of a focus on educational achievement. Classrooms for young children are all about chairs and tables, not driven by sand/water etc. This is policy-driven and against all international research on best developmental environments for young children. There is a concentration on what we can test, and play, as it is not easily testable becomes side-lined. While ETI talks a language of play based learning, it inspects against learning environment.

It was felt that there was too much of a focus on STEM as opposed to ‘STEAM’- to include the creative arts. This may result in children achieving but at what cost? There is great pressure on schools to achieve, and PE, dance, creative arts are only used if they can help with STEM subjects. Children are performing to adult expectations, and they aren’t encouraged to use their imagination. There is a lot of focus on structured play rather than free play.

It is as if the education system is trying to squeeze play out even though we know it will enhance education achievement. Northern Ireland has the youngest school starting age in the world, and the message to parents is to get them into school as early as possible. Some groups argue that our early starting age is to answer for higher levels of children with additional needs, with levels of stress and feelings of failure. This also can result in poor physical/mental health.

School playgrounds are governed by rules, they are not, as they should be, fully creative child-led environments. The Swedish system has developed a “whole bodied” curriculum, which is particularly beneficial for boys. Boys having to sit at desks for hours is disastrous. Breaks are very important, especially for boys.

There is very little input in teacher training in relation to the role of play in child development. Teacher training focusses on subject-based training and there is little grounding in play or child development.

Education policy in relation to homework is a huge problem. Despite the inclusion of ‘leisure’ in article 31, the burden of homework results in little time for play and leisure. Example of other countries – eg Finland where, 20 years ago education policy took a different direction, including banning homework, with very positive outcomes.

The example of Denmark was also discussed. Schools stopped being called schools, opened up their school grounds and are now called centres for children and the community. Opening up the school estates has been talked about for over 20 years, and while recently this has happened in many schools, this is not free access. Instead schools charge for using their space, and the subsequent clubs or activities can be very expensive for families to afford.

**Play in the family**

Some participants talked about the opportunities lost when separating play & family life. Parents or carers can turn every opportunity into a play opportunity, and enrich each experience. Play shouldn’t be separated/siloed.

**Design of public space**

Towns and cities need to be child friendly places, and should be designed with children in mind. There have been consultations since 2011 in which children (8-13 year olds) were asked what they want in their areas. (Belfast Healthy Cities) As a result a Charter was developed with 5 main calls:

1. well maintained, pleasing, attractive green spaces,
2. open public spaces
3. less & slower traffic,
4. connected & liveable – better connected and a greater sphere of travel
5. clean & safe spaces

It is vital that we don’t lose sight of children in communities, particularly built up spaces. These need to be planned better, especially for children with disabilities. It was remarked that there is more attention given to planning space for our cars than space for our children.

Playboard’s young researcher’s group (aged 8-12) identified the same issues – traffic, crossings, drug use, not being allowed to go too far. In summer months, rioting is another constraint. Children are kept in their homes and are not allowed out, to prevent them from engaging in rioting.

Many migrant families, eg Polish, Lithuanian communities, live in apartments and have very little access to green spaces. Indeed, it was said that short term planning has resulted in the selling off of green spaces and playground to provide land for apartments to be built. This impinges on children’s access to play spaces and to nature.

The community divisions have led to tangible barriers to play, including walls built between communities which keep children apart, and limit their access to play opportunities. Segregated education doesn’t help with this, but play has the potential to bring children and young people together. Segregated preschool and schools mean that children may not have contact in the formal system, but play and leisure activities work can be important to countering this.

In planning, there is a need to consider creating healthy places for children to be, to help promote good physical, emotional and mental health.

**Young people and play and leisure**

There is a real absence of play opportunities for post primary young people. Where there is provision, this tends to be youth clubs, and we impose as adults what their play should look like. But this group are least likely to want to engage in structured play.

Young people are clear in relation to community planning – they want to see youth spaces within communities, open spaces for adolescents. Adolescents need to be safe & visible.

Too often play is seen as anti-social behaviour, and young people are subject to a great deal of age-related discrimination, including negative stereotyping in the media. They also are treated badly in shops, and sometimes targeted with mosquito devices.

How do we make all of our communities safe for children and young people? There are few positive images of children and young people in NI. There are no positive messages re: valuing young people in the media. Indeed, many felt that the attitudes to children and young people playing in our community indicated an underlying lack of value placed on children.

There can be particular barriers for some groups of young people in engaging in leisure activities, notably those from Traveller communities, from ethnic minority communities, including Roma, and C&YO with disabilities.

**Children with disabilities accessing play**

There are particular barriers to disabled children and young people accessing play and leisure activities. In relation to fixed play facilities, very few are accessible to children with disabilities. There can also be difficulties in accessing less structured play opportunities. One of the problems is a lack of understanding in relation to behavioural issues among other children, parents and play providers.

While 'hanging out' in public spaces is one of the key ways young people socialise and spend their leisure time, this can be problematic for young people with disabilities. Many, particularly those who attend 'special schools' are socially isolated, and it can be very difficult, and sometimes not safe, to venture out into parks and other places on their own to mix with other young people. It was suggested that it would be beneficial to talk to children and young people in 'Sixth Sense children about how to help them access play and leisure opportunities.

Children with disabilities attending special schools in effect are accessing integrated education, but also experience segregation in relation to non-disabled children.

**Costs of play**

There is a complex relationship between play and poverty. Often lowest income families can feel a great deal of pressure to buy things for their children and young people. There are a lot of costs associated with play and leisure activities - the majority of after schools require parents to pay for everything, automatically excluding children from these kind of activities.

**The role of volunteers**

It is important to use what we have already, and to involve volunteers. For example, a special school in Derry has opened its play trail to children in the community.

Sports groups eg GAA are very important, particularly in areas where there is a dirth of other provision - there is free access and relies on volunteering. Often sports clubs are the only way young people can access sports and leisure activities in their communities. Churches also have a key role in relation to youth services.

It is important to support community based play volunteers. This helps to empower communities, however, it was said that the tie into education Art 25(1) Regulation is putting volunteers off being involved.

**Language, culture and play**

This article includes cultural involvement, and therefore children’s language rights. Example of the Polish Saturday School which has over 200 children and young people aged 3-16. There is no encouragement re: support for developing identity & cultural nights.

BURC – (Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre) – they help to educate newcomers as to the system in NI Culture but also encourage respect for own culture also.

It is important that children’s culture is celebrated and they shouldn’t be made to feel intimidated or ashamed. We should not be working toward assimilation, but a fruit salad approach - ie all cultures recognised and respected. “Respect yourself have a strong identity & respect others”. Need to look at how we make space as a host culture to allow for respect in society.

Language barriers can affect access to policy and leisure opportunities, as it can be hard to find out when things are happening. They miss out regularly on everyday play and leisure opportunities and it would be helpful if something was done to improve information sharing with those whose first language is not English.

**Play and technology**

It was recognised that technology was not necessarily a bad thing in relation to play and leisure. Parents want info on the impact of technology. There is, apparently, emerging knowledge of the impact of technology on children and young people’s play, for example from the US Association of Paediatricians. They are suggesting that children aged 0-3 should have no screen time due to the significant impact of technology on the development of their brain. It has a direct impact on their ability to play.

Some of the games young people play impacts on their ability to self regulate. Stewart Shanher research has looked at technology/gaming and the impact of it on construction of games. His findings suggest that this leads to a heightened level of sensitivity, impacting on sleep patterns and concentration etc.

Civic Society ‘Enjoyment of Play and Leisure’ Workshop: Priorities

**Free play, fixed play, structured play**

* Free play
* Have opportunities to play
* Good equipment
* Continuous overemphasis on fixed play at the expense of community based free play.
* Balance of structured, formal and free play

**Communities are intolerant of children playing**

* Ensuring community spaces are safe
* Intolerance of children and young people @ play/recreation by adults within the community.

**Lack of tolerance of risk**

* Need to recognise the importance of risk challenge in play.

**Play and education**

* Role of schools/Teachers.
* Teachers understand play.
* Using play to learn.
* Opening up the school estate.
* Education – Informal play at break and lunch times.
* Failure of DE and schools to recognise role of play in children and young people’s development leading to restricted play opportunities in schools.
* Emphasis on play for after schools not homework clubs.
* Looking at the balance or value of cognitive learning in education - ‘Steam’ rather than ‘Stem’

**Play in the family**

* Parenting education.
* Parents’ role in early play to enhance communication of child & positive interaction.
* Parents rediscover the benefits of play and how to play with their children.

**Design of public space to make room for children playing**

* Need to look at physical environment for play.
* BHC charter for child friendly places.
* Healthy places are needed – green places, open places less traffic/slower, connected and enable. Clean & Safe.
* Healthy built environments.
* Child friendly places.
* Belfast Healthy Cities work on shaping healthier places. Places for children – work with 400 schools. 5 Key messages
* Turn derelict spaces into play spaces.
* Safe crossings
* Open spaces to allow natural play.
* How young people be safe/visible spaces
* Play for all ages needs to be integrated into all planning.

**Young people and play and leisure**

* How to provide an environment for teenagers as they become more anarchic and test boundaries.
* Spaces for teenagers

**Children with disabilities accessing play**

* Participation of Young people with disability in Sports & leisure.
* Facilitation to engage.
* Access to play for children & young people with disabilities

**Costs of play**

* Commercial impact on families and participating from low income.

**The role of volunteers**

* Communities supporting play.

**Access to nature**

* More open spaces enabling free creative exploration – not just playground but – trees, grass.

**Benefits of play**

* What the evidence – tells us –Please look at the up to date evidence on play & well being.
* Play fostering communication development of child
* Play as key part of social development of child

**Children and young people having a say in play**

* Engagement with children and young people – Give them ownership.
* More involvement of children & young people into decision making process when designing services for them.

**How to ensure Strategy delivers on play and leisure**

* Policy matters. Promote play planning
* Focus on play
* What are the links to the sustainable development goals especially the indicators?
* How are we going to progress on this outcome area?
* Outcomes need to have a framework and indicators best to measure play.
* Priority for all NI Councils to have a play policy in place

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Enjoyment of Play and Leisure’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Segregation in play and leisure**

* Sports are segregated based on community background. This limits opportunities to participate in different sports and prevents cross-community interaction.
* Social pressure prevents some young people getting involved with sports that are seen as belonging to a different community
* It is difficult for some young people to experience different cultures because of social boundaries and the fear of being mocked by others
* Class segregation is experienced by some sports (eg schools that only play rugby and not football)

**Impact of School on play and leisure**

* School gives a lot of homework – often several hours each night. This limits time for play, leisure and interacting with friends and family
* It is difficult to fit in time for homework, paid jobs etc and this can lead to stress. For some this was made worse by feeling pressure through social media to be seen to be participating in a lot of activities
* Standardised testing doesn’t work: It leads to performance pressure and doesn’t measure the person as a rounded individual or leave time for extracurricular activities that can contribute to this
* Some young people felt there was pressure in primary schools to take the transfer test and go to grammar school and that those who didn’t were ignored
* “they want us to be workers from an early age” – productivity is encouraged instead of play and exploration. One young person told of a 1 ½ year old family member who got a report card home from nursery school.
* Education is a mould that everyone is supposed to fit in to – it is not flexible to individual talents
* School has become more and more results / exam driven
* There is a lot of pressure to get in to well-paid jobs – STEM subjects and law etc are pushed but no consideration is given to the arts

**Play and leisure provision for teenagers**

* Public spaces are often not appropriate for older children and young people – this can lead to anti-social behaviour (eg play parks being vandalised)
* Some youth clubs only cater for those up to age 13 – there are no further opportunities until the age of 18

**Funding/ Costs**

* Everything available is very costly – even places that were once free, such as the library are now closed
* There is great disparity in the costs for summer schemes depending on location. There are not enough places in the cheaper ones
* School hired a yoga instructor to help with stress but it cost £50 for 6 classes so wasn’t accessible for most people

**Concerns about risk**

* Parks close to early because of “health and safety scaremongering”
* Health and safety fears have reduced the amount of play equipment that is available and that all the fun things have been removed as they were deemed too risky

**Lack of leisure opportunities and facilities**

* Rural communities have very few facilities and even those that do cost money
* No summer schemes are available in rural areas
* “moving cows is the only free thing in rural areas!”
* ID is needed to prove age. Some experienced problems accessing concerts for over 16 year olds, others had problems on public transport getting child fares even though they were entitled to them

**Transport**

* Transport is a barrier to participation in leisure – particularly for those in rural areas
* Seems unjust that a 60 year old who is in full time work can get a free bus pass but not a young person who has no money
* Transport is very problematic in rural areas due to infrequency of busses and distance to the routes. One young person had to cycle for ½ hour to get to the bus stop, which took them to another bus to get to school
* Bus passes are limited to one route – this doesn’t account for participation in after schools activities or those who go to other relatives after school

**Participation in Arts and Cultural Activities**

* The cost of participating in arts based after schools clubs is much higher than sports, which are generally free except for equipment
* The cost of art classes is quite high in school – this is not the case for sports
* Music and arts are very expensive to take part in
* The cost of instruments is a barrier to learning music
* “You want a rounded individual at the end so we should have better access to music and the arts”
* Music instruction is only for 15-25 minutes per week. Private tutors give more time but cost a lot more
* “it’s a waste of talent” when children and young people can’t be involved in cultural and arts activities because of the costs
* Some bullying of boys who do arts. Voice breaking was a concern – very few boys do music in later years in school – timetabling also contributed to this in some schools where it was a choice between arts and music
* All museums except Ulster Museum are very expensive. Participants felt there should be more opportunities for free cultural activities, including in rural areas

**Other**

* Some felt that they were not allowed time to be bored and that younger children are put in front of screens too often as a kind of electronic babysitting

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Enjoyment of Play and Leisure’ Workshop: Priorities and Additional Notes[[1]](#footnote-1)

Children and young people have little leisure time due to homework and assessments

* (There needs to be a) good balance of work & play
* Balance of work & play
* School – less time on work more free time/social time
* Too much homework when travel, relationships, fun, sleep taken into account.
* Too much pressure in school. Need a work play balance
* Too much homework – lack of sleep
* No free time due to school
* Too much school stress – lack of time
* School works us too hard.
* Amount of homework
* That there’s too much homework – Not enough time 4 us
* Education treadmill from very early age
* Testing children from a young age
* Testing (STATS)
* Age tests School life
* Standardised Testing?
* Disagree with the idea to remove standardised testing.
* Standardised testing should be stopped
* Children being assessed too much.
* *Good balance of work and play*
* *Balance of work and play*
* *Balance of work and play*
* *Have a good balance of work and play*
* *Exams and schoolwork pressures*
* *Exams and pressure of school work*
* *The ‘treadmill’ of education – many languages at 3*
* *Time taken*
* *Learning and leisure integrated*
* *Integrate the two*
* *Transfer test*
* *Only test – doesn’t reflect all ability*
* *Standard testing*
* *Standardised testing*
* *Testing*
* *Testing etc*
* *With regards to standardising testing, I find it hard to see an alternative, already I feel that with the possibility to choose GCSEs, that it’s not standardised enough. Really people need to be compared by using same tests.*

Costs of leisure and cultural activities exclude young people - funding needs to be provided

* Museums should be free
* Cost of activities & things – e.g. museums
* Need to promote more free activities – Ulster Museum.
* The cost of Art and Music is too high – Puts people off
* Funding for art & Music
* No funding for arts & music
* Costs of social activities
* Funds
* Funding – less emphasis purely on STEM more on the arts.
* *Funding*
* *The price of sports, music and toys etc for children who cannot afford*
* *Prices of sports, music lesson, toys etc*
* *Funding – Art GCSE – cost – immersing in other cultures – good but difficult*
* *(Should be) free for the majority of events*
* *Extra activities for children (provided by school)*
* *Access to art/music*
* *Music lessons and costs*
* *Funding – art and music*
* *Culture emersion*
* *Cultural emersion*
* *Wide range opportunities*

There are few facilities for young people

* Cost & Lack of facilities & clubs
* Lack of facilities for young people so they turn to dangerous things.
* Lack of facilities – None in rural areas.
* Very little facilities in more rural areas
* Lack of things to do for young people
* Improve access to extra – curricular activities
* Increase funding in leisure infra structure
* Antisocial activities due to nowhere to go
* *Lack of facilities for young people*
* *More facilities in smaller towns*
* *Less for young people than children leading to antisocial behaviour*
* *Complaints about antisocial behaviour when there is too much costs etc and nothing to do*
* *Lack of facilities for young people*
* *Available to all young people*
* *Less for young people than children – anti-social activity, no places to go*
* *Anti-social behaviour*
* *Wide range, given opportunities*

A lack of transport, and the expense of transport, can prevent young people accessing leisure activities

* Bus/train fares
* Travel- Public transport is terrible
* Transport – more widely available
* *Bus pass costs*

Sports are often segregated

* Unification of sports for all religious groups
* Segregation of sport
* Segregation of sport
* Segregation in sport puts people off
* I feel there needs to be much more integrated activities
* Segregation in sport
* Segregation – Sport
* Differences in sport & religion
* Sport segregation
* *Polarisation of sport, should be more cross-community sport*
* *Segregation between sports*
* *Segregation between sports depending on religion/class/religion in sport*
* *Polarisation of sports*
* *More cross – community sports*

Some young people are particularly excluded from play and leisure activities

* *Young carers – have to act like adults, don’t get a chance to be a child as much*
* *Young carers don’t really get the same rest and time to relax*
* *Children in care: sports and leisure*
* *Children in care: music and sport and rest, expenses and space*
* *Young people with disabilities: where can they go?*

Communities can be hostile to children and young people playing and ‘hanging out’

* *Negative stereotyping*
* *Negative stereotyping*
* *Negative stereotyping*

Additional points

* ID Cards (would be helpful)
* Social pressure
* Stress Programmes
* Risks – Safety.
* *UNCRC*

Outcome 3: Learning and Achieving

Feedback from Civic Society Workshop

Civic Society ‘Learning and Achieving’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

Areas which the Workshop focused on include what is an ‘education’, particularly in light of Article 29(1) of the UNCRC and General Comment 1. Questions such as ‘what is achievement?’ and ‘how do we measure achievement?’ were discussed at length. The issues discussed can be broken down as follows:-

**‘Education’, Outcome Measures and Well-being**

* What type of education do we expect? We should be giving all children an education which is compliant with Article 29(1) of the UNCRC
* What is the point of education? Grades don’t indicate the progress of an individual child’s personality and talents. We need an alternative measure
* We need to measure progress not just the end result
* We need to end the use of assessments league tables
* We are educating children to be units of the economy, rather than to change the world or learn about social responsibility
* It should be the needs of the child which determine the services available and not the school
* Are we as a society to focus solely on the educational attainment of children but give them a rubbish quality of life?
* What do kids like about school? It is not the subjects – it’s their friends. There needs to be more emphasis on ‘enjoyment’ in school and the development of social skills and abilities as opposed to a purely academic focus
* There is an appetite to discuss education in a different way. Do we take that risk and try something new and whose child has to suffer being the “guinea pig”?
* There needs to be work done with parents who are ultimately the decision makers when it comes to choosing schools as parents are being guided by league tables and academic achievement, without knowing the impact that pressure to achieve in schools is having on the mental health of their children. We need well-being measurements to determine the impact of pressure on the mental health of children in school.
* There are lots of measurement tools for well being but they are not used
* A good model is the UNESCO table – it should be used
* There are other education models/better models in the world which could be utilised
* There needs to be hard and soft goals in the measurement of progress in education, e.g. In Italy all children are educated together and in Finland assessment of children happens only at the end of the school life
* There is a fundamental question – Do we need and education evolution or revolution?
* Do you rock the boat or try to continue on in the current system of education which is failing so many children?
* Mainstream curriculum needs to bring activities into the curriculum to have a well rounded child
* School starting age – youngest in the world 4yrs 2 months – has an impact on emotional wellbeing Paolo Fiery education of oppressed – our system is oppressive
* NI education system is now rubbish and we need to use the hard evidence to highlight this

**Children with Additional Needs**

* The education system must meet the needs of all children and no child should be destined to fail due to their particular circumstances, including children with disabilities, looked after children, children in poverty, Newcomer, Traveller and Roma children, Protestant working class boys and young carers

**Disabilities and Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

* Young people with disabilities attending main stream education but no academic attainment
* Transitioning – moving to what – very little
* Not empowered to reach potential
* Need to nurture to what they can do not what they can’t do
* Adults are limiting their possibilities
* They aren’t learning difficulties they are teaching difficulties!
* Under assessment of SEN as well as language needs
* Professionals are still not able to assess SEN in the language that is most appropriate and comfortable to children with SEN.
* Parents also need to have their capacity built so that they are able to navigate the system.
* Children and young people live with aspirations and then realise they can’t attain these e.g. someone with a learning disability can go through school and develop aspirations but these cannot be realised as school is not preparing them to meet their aspirations – hugely disappointing and letting these children down
* Adults need to get away from the negative attitudes regarding children and young people with SEN
* Example of child attending a SEN school which takes 1 hour to get to – attitude was that it didn’t matter if he missed classes – it does matter to him and that he is treated differently – why can’t he go to a main stream school in his community & have the services
* There are so many good resources in children’s services but they don’t transfer to adult services
* SEN code of practice – talks about engaging but saying it doesn’t make it happen?
* Where a child has needs how do we provide education and services together? Children with additional needs require the input of a multi-disciplinary team to meet the needs of the ‘whole child’

**Communication Skills**

* Research shows that some preschool children now do not have the right level of communication going into school. This impacts on education and the development of social skills. It is unclear if this is a result of family or technology. Teachers are trying to teach a child who isn’t ready for school and this needs to be recognised in the strategy
* We need to use SLT and other therapies to help with mainstream school
* SLT helps with speech but also other aspects of life, including confidence and being happy
* Early intervention is needed

**Young Carers**

* Young carers – falling behind in school is not their fault. They need additional help and support

**Looked After Children**

* Looked after children are failing in great numbers in education. We need to address their needs in a way which is reflective of their life circumstances. This will require investment and flexibility

**Children in Poverty / the Costs of Education**

* Young people living in poverty are being failed by the education system – especially with regard to the costs of education e.g. school books, school trips, transfer test costs etc. Young people recognise that this is having a detrimental effect on their education
* There should be a fund for families having difficulty meeting the costs of education so that all children can fully participate in their education in line with the obligations under the UNCRC
* We need to establish the extent to which the costs of education are impacting on the ability of children from a range of backgrounds, not just families in poverty, to fully participate in education / achieve
* Parents who have the money can afford to have a greater choice and create better advantages for their children e.g. tuition for the transfer test, the ability to take part in school trips, extra-curricular activities, wearing the full school uniform, not going hungry etc.

**Transfer Test and Segregation**

* Don’t discuss because there is no point/no political will to address either of these issues
* Need to be creative and address the issues in a different way as society wants to move on
* Segregation on grounds of religion, ability, sex – this needs to stop. We need a fully integrated system of education

**Bullying**

* Do parents know what children are feeling?
* Does a child have confidence and language to express themselves? They can have coping and tactic mechanisms so don’t have to speak – so how do you know? We need to build resilience in children and deal with bullying better
* Cyber-bullying is totally unaddressed in NI. We need an Internet Safety Strategy which will deal with this issue. Children from NI have and will continue to die as a result. This must be a priority.

**Government and the Children and young person’s strategy**

* Opportunity to change with new departments and NGOS & sector should help the change
* The language needs to change in the Children and young person’s strategy to language which reflects the obligations on Government to deliver an education for all of our children which aligns with Article 29(1) of the UNCRC
* Education is driven by the self-interest of power blocks which push misinformation
* Hope that the agencies work together and that the Strategy will address the issues
* Cooperation is needed at the highest level
* Co-operation is needed at the interface between health and education
* Co-operation needs to cascade from nursery level
* Political leaders need to bring people with them and make real progress
* Only thing stopping cooperation is attitudes
* 2 political houses in NI don’t want to change
* Archaic stuff – the strategy needs to improve standards

**Schools, Parents, Teachers and Society as a Whole**

* Teacher training is outdated – it is subject based – health and social needs to be integrated in training
* Teachers say that they are only here to teach – this makes things difficult – it should be full service schools or are we expecting too much of teachers?
* There are pilot programmes if funded to do training to build capacity in teachers to recognise issues/symptoms but don’t have to deal with specifics it can then be referred on. This learning could be better utilised
* Need to educate parents to empower and encourage children to grow not limit them
* Need to provide parents with accurate information – should educate from age 7 below this is too early
* What we do as a whole society is vitally important – don’t want to link to the past all the time
* Transgenerational conflict legacy issues are impacting on children, there needs to be a recognition of this and these issues need to be addressed in education and in society more generally. They are impacting on the ability of children to develop to their maximum potential
* We need to instil a sense of community – it should be the responsibility of everyone to look after everyone not just their own family
* Food in schools needs to change. Schools say parents must provide healthy snacks but school dinners are processed

**Funding for Education**

* Multi disciplinary teams are only for P1-4 but even these are stretched
* Inequity of funding per child – it depends on area or sector
* There is no common funding within the Education system
* There needs to be transparency in funding for education and what money is spent on
* We need to spend money in education better and understand where money is being spent better, including whether we as a society are getting value for money

**Good Practice Models**

* Polish Saturday School – This has made a huge difference to the lives of the children and families who attend
* Whole School Models – opening up schools as a community resource and bringing parents into schools to deal with their experience of education where these are negative
* Save the Children FAST Project
* Barnardos Community Schools Initiative

Civic Society ‘Learning and Achieving’ Workshop: Priorities

With regard to ‘Learning and Achieving’, the priority areas identified by participants were:

**‘Education’, Outcome Measures and Well-being**

* Outcomes should be based on the child, not on education or health but on the individual
* Introduce well-being league tables
* If purpose of education is developmental and rooted in the UNCRC definition, then strategy needs to reflect the value of non-formal education and youth services
* Address how achievement is measured in school
* Introduce measures of well-being for children in schools and make these available to parents and carers
* Well-being and good mental health should be considered alongside academic achievement
* More value on learning that is other than cognitive
* End the use of league tables
* Educate young people to change the world, not to be units of the economy
* How do we describe the outcomes to positive educational systems – broader than educational measures, including well-being, participation in life
* Paradigm shift – change the focus of a successful school and pupils
* Addressing ‘achievement’ – what is achievement and how does well-being fit into ‘achievement’?
* Parents should be able to discuss their children’s well-being more often
* Explore the use of more full service schools
* Change assessment methods at 16-18 to suit the revised curriculum
* We need a revolution in education – a more open system and academy options
* Change the school starting age to 5/6
* Provide nurturing environments from age 3 and a half, focusing on well-being, resilience and the arts
* Recognise that formal education fails many young people and that alternatives work
* Offer more vocational educational choices

**Children with Additional Needs**

**Disabilities and Special Educational Needs**

* Funding for children with disabilities needs to be clearly identified to ensure they are not lost within the school budget
* Children with disabilities need to be given the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers
* Ensure children with SEN are given a chance to have their voices heard, including provision of AAC
* Early intervention for young people with learning difficulties
* Assessment of SEN and AEN has to happen in a more timely manner – more training required for teachers and specialism teachers
* Enable children with a disability to make appropriate choices as they move through the educational system into adult life
* Community schools – particularly around SEN and parents have no support at the school gates as children travel for hours on buses to get to school

**Communication Skills**

* Children with Speech and Language needs get the support they need to achieve their full potential
* Ensure every child has appropriate communication skills for learning and achievement for life

**Young Carers**

* Young carers should be supported to enable them to achieve in school

**Looked After Children**

* Prioritise children in care in terms of choosing which school to attend
* Reference and incorporate the upcoming DE LAC Strategy and ensure robust monitoring of outcomes.
* Research level and impact of missing school, exclusions and suspensions amongst children and young people in care

**Children in Poverty / the Costs of Education**

* More funding in education for children with families on benefits and those who can’t meet the costs of education.
* Consideration of families who are working poor
* Free school education for all, this should include extra-curricular activities
* Engage and Support the working class communities in education
* Address poverty – working class pupils outcomes

**Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Children**

* More focus on developing the BME child’s first language rather than pressurising parents to teach English to their children
* Better, deeper co-operation links between Government Department / Statutory bodies and BME groups

**Transfer Test and Segregation**

* More integrated learning across communities, cultures and needs
* Stop the transfer test at age 11
* End academic selection
* Eliminate segregation of minority children in terms of school placements

**Bullying**

* Higher emphasis on bullying in schools and evidence on how it is dealt with

**Government and the Children and young person’s strategy**

* Ensure one of the measurement tools to monitor the strategy draws on responses from young people
* Board of Governors being held to account. Parents and community representatives are on Boards of Governors. This leads to the removal of power from the ‘middle ground’ who have vested interests
* The Children and young person’s strategy needs to take a whole societal approach and make clear links to other Government strategies / Executive priorities

**Schools, Parents, Teachers and Society as a Whole**

* Better teacher training for special needs

**Participation**

* Education must seek and hear the voices of children and young people and their families
* Voice of the child is vital in shaping education – they are service users and there should be regular and ongoing conversations
* Advocacy for children and young people in education

**The Legacy of the Conflict**

* The legacy of the conflict continues to impact on the lives of children and young people directly and indirectly and must be addressed. This includes what schools teach about the conflict and segregated education on grounds of religion.

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Learning and Achieving’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Subject Choices / School’s image**

* Forced to do subjects you don’t want to e.g. RE, PE
* Being forced to do certain subjects such as PE
* The schools’ image is more important than the young people and meeting their needs.
* There’s a focus on league tables
* Young people should be able to pick subjects without restrictions. This is because of the school worrying about its image to achieve grades
* Lower (educational attainment) classes can’t chose certain subjects – may be forced to do ‘hair and beauty’
* Some school have entry requirement for A-levels – which precludes access
* You should be able to develop what you struggle with but enjoy what you’re good at.
* Arts aren’t taken seriously. If you do maths, you’re doing well but if you doing drama, you must be failing at other subjects
* There needs to be more variety of subjects, e.g., sociology not just maths / science
* Needs to be more timetable flexibility – preventing children from being able to study the subjects of their choice
* Teachers should not show favouritism to some pupils, or entire classes
* School takes up your life
* Some teachers can’t teach, especially in poorer schools

**Transfer test**

* Transfer test is not executed well – needs to be meaningfully addressed
* Transfer test is too forced – parents are making children do the test
* Too much stress, too young
* Everyone learns at different ages
* 11yrs old is far too young

**Cost of Education**

* There is a high cost for some classes e.g. home economics
* There’s a cost to do the transfer test; tuition costs
* Always collections for teachers
* Asked for voluntary contribution to school of £70 or more (Rathmore Grammar) but don’t dare ask for what it’s for

**Schools Counselling**

* Counselling is found in the corner of the school
* Only 2 hrs a week for 800 pupils
* There is a stigma attached to counselling

**School Budgets**

* Need more budget for schools – teachers are buying equipment
* Schools are spending on wrong things like a sports hall

**Shared Education**

* Some schools can share resources but this is more difficult if you live in a rural area.
* Some good practice around sharing – collaboration
* Shared education between different school – ‘smartest in one school and dumbest in another’

**Participation**

* Schools councils should be allowed to be pro-active not re-active and tokenistic
* Good practice - Pupils involved in recruitment in Victoria College & Carrick Grammar

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Learning and Achieving’ Workshop: Priorities

With regard to ‘Learning and Achieving’, the priority areas identified by the NYOUNG PEOPLE were:

**League Tables**

* Abolish league tables
* STOP LEAGUE TABLES
* Abolish league tables
* League tables should be abolished
* Eliminate league tables

**Subject Choices**

* Subjects not offered to all who want to do them
* RE studies should be optional
* Subjects forced
* Young people shouldn’t be forced to do subjects
* GCSE RE and other compulsory GCSE’s and A Levels
* Abolish entry requirements - can’t do higher tiers
* Give pupils a fair chance in subjects re. not able to do high level and get good grades
* Entry requirements – can’t do higher tiers
* Let children pick their subjects regardless of their intellect
* Children should do whatever subjects they want to do
* Should be able to do subjects and not let timetabling hold you back
* Timetabling problems prevent children from being able to study the subjects that they want to
* Multiple, different selection of subjects not just maths, English literature; should have more sociology and politics so children can learn about the land they live in

**Pressure in School**

* Shouldn’t force children to do it if they can’t
* Developing what you struggle with but not putting too much pressure on you to get good grades, instead excel at what you are good at
* Pressure of transfer tests and raking and grading in schools
* Less pressure
* Reduce homework
* Should measure anxiety / stress levels, not just ‘good’ grades
* School should be a part of your life not your whole life
* No transfer test – too much stress on children

**Transfer test**

* Transfer test needs fixed
* Develop a fair transfer test
* Organise the transfer test

**The Costs of Education**

* Cost of schools – extra money / uniforms
* Cost of uniforms
* Cost of uniforms
* Cost of uniforms and voluntary contributions
* PE kit keeps changing

**Funding for Education**

* Schools need more funding
* Money is spent on things that pupils don’t even use
* Schools waste money on rubbish
* Schools need more money

**Participation**

* Pupils not listened to

**Schools Counselling**

* Counselling isn’t available

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Learning and Achieving’ Workshop: Additional Notes

* School budgets are low
* League tables
* Sectarianism
* Forced to do subjects you don’t want to do, e.g. PE and RE
* Schools care more about their image
* Transfer tests
* GCSE and A level entry requirements
* Creative classes aren’t taken seriously
* Counselling sessions
* Widen range of subjects
* Cost of classes
* Favouritism
* Timetable flexibility
* Starting age too low
* Budget for school too low
* Student council
* Forced to do certain subjects
* PE – shouldn’t have to
* Students not getting full input into choosing subjects
* Lower class students getting less choices
* Pressure on subjects that struggle with
* Arts not taken seriously
* More variety of subjects
* Funding for certain subjects (e.g. HE)
* Timetabling
* Transfer test – too forced – unfair
* Bad teachers – pupil input in hiring
* Students helping choose teachers
* Student council not active/not using pupil opinions
* If don’t have full uniform get screamed at
* School taking up life
* Act in a way to promote:
* League tables
* Dignity
* Not only grades matter
* Test other things/develop maximum potential
* Excel in subjects they are good at
* Transfer should measure more than Math/English
* Be able to choose their own subjects
* Access to subjects YOU want to do
* Develop what you struggle with although you should have the chance not to have to put pressure on yourself too much
* Variety of subjects
* Transfer test – not executed well enough
* Grading of schools – ranking
* Showcase some schools with diversity – children should grow up with other people with different religion to promote peace
* Should measure anxiety/stress levels in schools not just grades
* Need to have a variety of subjects not just Maths etc, should have more sociology, politics, teach children about world they live in
* Shouldn’t be forced to do some subjects
* Every child given same opportunity
* No transfer test – too much stress on young people
* League tables
* School too much pressure
* RE GCSE compulsory
* PE
* Entry requirements
* Arts aren’t taken seriously
* Budget is too low
* Variety of subjects
* Costs
* Timetable
* Favouritism with students
* Transfer test
* School Councils
* Work on transfer test
* Subjects forced – RE, PE
* Schools worried on image
* Arts are not taken seriously
* Can’t choose subject because clashes with timetable
* Varied subjects
* League table
* Lacks in a way in primary education
* Article 29 – mental, physical ability
* UK – review issues – encourage participation, sex-ed, social equality, appeal against address segregation, abolish transfer tests (2008 – now June 2016!!!)
* School starting age too low
* Indoctrination of bigotry
* Too much focus on STEM
* Funding
* League tables
* Equality Vs Equity
* School should be part of your life not just your life
* Later starting time?
* League table
* Favouritism in students
* Local high schools – travel
* Payment to Home Economics
* RE studies – what religion
* English and Maths priority
* GCSE blocks

Outcome 4: Living in Safety and with Stability

Feedback from Civic Society workshop

Civic Society ‘Living in Safety and with Stability’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Vulnerability to alcohol and substance use**

* Legal highs are a big issue for a small group of children and young people, the effect on physical and mental health is different to other drugs and support services aren’t keeping up.
* Drugs can impact on a young person’s ability to keep themselves safe or to maintain a tenancy.
* Interventions need to be immediate, to catch the opportunity when a young person recognises the need for and is open to help.
* There is no residential drug and alcohol unit for children and young people to ‘dry out’ (a prison isn’t a ‘place of safety’).

**Housing and homelessness**

* Homelessness is a big issue and too far down the list of priorities - safe, sustainable affordable housing is needed.
* Welfare reform is having a negative impact.
* There is a need for an integrated approach to homelessness i.e. financial, mental health etc.

**Transitions to adulthood**

* When young people ‘age out’ of care they are left on their own, which leads to inequality compared to their peers who aren’t care experienced. They need more time to develop their own support structures and should be supported up to the age of 25 in recognition of the lack of safety and stability they have faced. The cut off at 21 is a problem.
* There is still a cliff edge when young people leave care – they need more time to develop their own support structures.
* Age limits in access to services is a problem.
* Child therapeutic services drop off at 18, then have to transition to adult services.

**Particularly vulnerable groups and issues**

* CSE and need to recognise that boys and young men are vulnerable too.
* Impact of paramilitaries - likely that those most at risk are within communities/area most affected by the conflict.
* Separated/unaccompanied children – need long term strategy that includes transition to adulthood and includes employment, education and housing.
* Care – children and young people don’t always reach their educational milestones; increased risk of paramilitary influence/violence; drugs and alcohol; link between leaving care and homelessness when support is withdrawn at 21; ‘stepped down’ model needed; continuity of relationships needed, trust is really important for young people.
* Mental health – need better awareness, early intervention for issues coming through from primary schools eg self harm, relationship issues, stress/anxiety. Noted that while some children may be reaching educational attainment there are other issues but these are less visible (middle class backgrounds, grammar schools). Waiting lists to access self harm/suicide/mental health services and risks of this.

**Child centred services**

* Services need to be tailored and better respond to the needs of the children and young people.
* Sectors need to work in a more integrated way.
* There is a need for a more holistic view.
* Young males in particular don’t engage with ‘ordinary services’.
* There are inherent issues with services - including need to get GP referral to services.
* Need to move away from treating children and young people in an ‘adult world’. Need to think about different ways of communicating with children and young people being to access services, including how we risk assess when using these media i.e. online, text.
* Need a 24/ 7 service.
* Need for continuity of therapeutic care - not just about bringing young people to a place of safety.
* Need to see a shift in service delivery, cultural shift in how we do things.
* Children and young people should have the right to choose services, they shouldn’t need to wait until they are 18 yrs old.
* Very few services in NI that respond in a way that children can respond to.
* The outcomes measured need to reflect what is significant progress or change a young person.
* Redesigning the system is not cost effective - need to be forward thinking.
* The reality is that evolving innovative practices will have to happen within a restricted budget.
* Looking at research from around the world.

**Outcomes, monitoring and evaluation**

* It is easy to put problems on the table, less easy to look at innovative solutions.
* Challenge of how do you do what you do differently whilst meeting work needs.
* Outcomes need to reflect on small changes for children and young people that can be major achievements for them.
* The outcomes being measured need to reflect what are significant changes for young people.
* Measurement frameworks need to have outputs, outcome and impact - impact doesn’t happen overnight.
* Practitioners can inform policy makers but they need to take heed.
* Children and young person’s strategy could be the vehicle to hold government responsibilities around the CSCA to account.
* Need to help government departments with the ‘how?’ of integrated working.
* Lip service is paid to the UNCRC, little implementation, proper implementation would bring other Conventions with it, such as the UNCRPD.

**Current structures**

* Currently don’t even have a suicide prevention strategy.
* Some experiences with the children and young people’s sub-groups and Domestic and Sexual Violence subgroup are that you need to be on the group to be heard, that groups are limited in their ability or can be ‘toothless tigers’ not fulfilling their potential.
* Structures can reinforce silos, for example, homelessness and prevention and early intervention sitting within different sub groups or children affected by domestic violence not sitting under any group.
* There is a need for clearer structures and accountability.
* Short term funding for organisations that work with or involve children creates instability for children.
* SBNI and power imbalance in membership between funders and recipients that can impede open dialogue and feedback.
* Need for parity of esteem between sectors when around the discussion table.
* There needs to be links between strategic and operational activities- this can be difficult- need depts. to support vision which filters down to operational activities.
* Need to get the architecture right in delivering for children and young people.
* Practitioners don’t feel like they are being heard - they are saying the same things over and over again. There is a need for a common language.
* Children and young person’s strategy needs to encompass all policies / strategies that affect children.

Civic Society ‘Living in Safety and with Stability’ Workshop: Priorities

**Services**

* Need for services to be responsive and innovative with longer more stable / secure transitions.
* Need for all the right services (housing, rehab / detox, transitions) and support that is relationship based and immediate.

**Transition/age remit**

* Need for additional supports/services for care leavers.
* Extend the age of exclusion criteria of services from 18 and change to 25 years. Unacceptable to discard young people once 18.
* Would like strategy to promote/realise a whole systems integrated approach to support young people to take control over pathways to independence.
* Services and support beyond 18-21 and that are based on what young people need.

**Stability**

* Access to timely support to help young people and families avoid crisis.
* Need for responsiveness to children at risk.

**Children and young person’s strategy**

* Link Strategy to UNCRC and other human rights conventions and instruments.
* Definition between outcome, output and impact.
* Need for all organisations to have business plan aligned to outcomes.
* Clear and workable structure and processes to protect and promote children’s rights.
* Government must incorporate respect for children and young people’s views when planning policies.

**Housing**

* Affordability and step down models for young people to secure tenancies.
* For stability, education need clear definitions of what is an adult when it comes to affordability eg Hardship fund, 18 to apply and get but living at home.
* Promote standard provision of effective services for children and young people in care / Care Leavers across all HSCTs.
* Housing Strategy for young people aged 14-18 yrs which reflects needs of vulnerable young people.
* Access to safe decent / affordable housing is vital foundation stone to support young people to become economically active.
* Every young person with a safe place to live.

**Care**

* Need for additional supports / services for care leavers.
* Promote standard provision of effective services for children in care / care leavers across all HSCTs.
* Co-ordinate all strategies, plans, policies for children in care and care leavers.
* Importance of transitions for young people leaving care- support / additional help.
* Inform key targets in strategies for children in care / care leavers specifically: support to 25.

**Protection**

* Children and young people affected by sexual exploitation want to work with the voluntary service that makes the difference for them.
* Need to increase awareness of healthy relationships among children and young people.
* Recognition of domestic violence as a key issue affecting children.

**Alcohol and substance use**

* Rehab facilities for young people under 13 yrs for drying out from substance misuse.
* Impact of drug use on safety and stability in terms of housing and communities.

**Safe spaces**

* Engaging a wider sector of experts in building safe environments for children e.g. architects, planners etc.
* Safe ‘places’ for children, child friendly environment and a healthy built environment.

**Others**

* Disability: take account of the needs of children and young people with disabilities.
* Transgender children and young people: accessing services/support; mental health issues; self-harm; suicide; transitions to adult services; transition stages in education.
* From a volunteer background, there needs to be consideration that volunteers hold a form of responsibility with the stability with a child they work with and develop a relationship with.

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Living in Safety and with Stability’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Protection**

* Too often the social worker is blamed.
* Social workers should be allowed to make unannounced visits.
* CSE – cases are dragged out too long. A journalist told young person no point going to court as the man has more power in their experience.
* CSE cases – parents don’t want their child to be put through it.
* E-safety lessons not taken seriously – ridiculous videos, outdated, point made about needing help, as got into trouble on facebook.
* E-safety – pupils ‘going live’ (i.e. secretly filming) in schools.
* Trivialisation of terms like ‘rape’ in schools, sometimes the word is used lightly (instead of ‘will be cross with me’).
* Self harm.
* Alcohol and drugs not taken seriously by police, teachers.
* Can also be an over-emphasis on safety.

**Legacy of the conflict**

* Segregation is putting people in danger.
* In Northern Ireland we have peace walls – not sure if this makes people safe.
* Need to wait to older generation die out – children and young people of the 90’s generation don’t care about religion or politics.
* Paramilitary activity – feels like troubles are coming back, with 3 deaths in 1 week
* Cross community school activities very good to overcome divisions. Very scary sometimes to go on bus or shop if you have a certain school uniform on.
* Segregation in schools
* Fears of paramilitaries
* School system is reinforcing divisions. So many different schools, so many divisions, conflict on buses.
* Even shops are segregated!

**Schools**

* Pastoral Care: not good quality or teachers using it as excuse to send people out they don’t like. A good friend who is gay - sent to pastoral and nothing done about it.
* Need discrete unbiased pastoral care.
* Pastoral care should be provided by counsellors not teachers, would be more confidential.
* People should be treated equally – no matter what they did in the past.
* Counselling in schools only 2 hours a week, small room, not very confidential.
* Drink and drugs education is bit ‘naaf’.
* Bullying – bullying of LGBT young people is badly dealt with; those affected by bullying need support from friends; teacher can dislike some young people and then not believe them.
* No access to counselling, no privacy.
* Schools not taking things seriously.

**LGBTQIA young people**

* Bullying of LGBT young people is dealt with badly.
* Young LGBT need to be helped and supported.
* LGBT discrimination – reducing this and start teaching about this early.
* LGBT youth protected.

**Family breakdown**

* Stability when parents split up can be really difficult for children and young people they don’t get a say and either the parents or the social workers can take over.
* Children should be prioritised in a divorce situation.
* If conflictual, divorce very damaging on children.
* Difficulties of supervised visits.

**Disability**

* Anyone who has a disability should have a buddy who understands them, so they’re independent, don’t always want to bring your parent to meetings etc.
* Problems in school if you have mobility issues.

**Others**

* Young carers: should get proper support.
* Care in care: children in care should be able to make their own decisions.
* Need to explore/explain ‘stability’ means; look at examples from other countries eg Norway and Nordic countries do it better, children and young people happier.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Living in Safety and with Stability’ Workshop: Priorities

**Safety and protection**

* E-safety.
* Better E-safety information.
* CSE.
* Internet safety.
* Internet safety in school should be made more appropriate.
* E-safety taken more seriously.

**Legal proceedings**

* Sequence of court cases – money, purpose.
* That children should be heard in cases and there’s a way to helpfully evaluate a child’s progress.

**Education and pastoral care**

* Councils – schools.
* Better counsellor.
* Pastoral care.
* Discreet, unbiased pastoral care.
* Counselling.
* Schools not taking things seriously.
* More support from school.
* Guidance counsellors.
* No access to counselling.
* Counselling more available.

**Alcohol and drugs**

* Drugs and alcohol exaggerated.
* Drink and drugs.
* Self harm and drugs.

**Legacy of the conflict**

* Peace walls/schools.
* The troubles/sectarian.
* Segregation is putting people in danger (peace walls; in schools etc).
* Segregation in schools.
* Segregation – too much past remembered.
* Pastoral care – free from religion.
* Troubles in the past.
* Overcoming segregation.
* Fears of paramilitaries etc.

**Family breakdown**

* Children should be prioritised in divorce situation.
* Supporting children whose parents are divorced.

**Vulnerable groups**

* Young LGBTQIA people need to be helped and supported.
* Reduction of discrimination, especially LGBTQIA.
* Better support for LGBT teens.
* LGBT discrimination.
* LGBT.
* LGBT youth protected.
* Children in care.
* Young carers getting proper support.
* Support for teens.
* Everyone treated the same when they raise an issue.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Living in Safety and with Stability’ Workshop: Additional Notes

* Discrimination of LGBT
* Rape
* Drink and drugs
* Shouldn’t be ashamed of therapy
* Divorces
* LGBTQIA
* Disabilities in school: mobility, problems, travel safety
* Self harm support
* Children in care: have their own decision to make about what happens
* Internet safety
* Counselling: need to get a grip
* Disabilities forced out of mainstream schools into ‘special schools’
* Equality Commission
* Children with mobility problems find hard to get round schools especially if the school is not specially equipped
* Children in care have bigger say in what happens to them
* Counselling in school
* Increasing E-safety in schools
* Counselling
* Reduce discrimination of LGBTQIAT
* Free of hate crimes/non-judgemental
* Prosecuting those who abuse children
* Care – both receiving and giving
* Paramilitaries – fear
* Care – both receiving and giving
* Paramilitaries – fear
* Pastoral care – more discrete etc
* Foster homes etc
* Over exaggeration
* Internet safety
* LGBT
* Divorces
* Prioritise children in divorces
* Discrimination against LGBTQIA
* Trivialisation of rape in schools
* Drink and drugs

Outcome 5: Economic and Environmental Well-Being

Feedback Civic Society workshop

Civic Society ‘Economic and Environmental Well-Being’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Housing and homelessness**

* Young people living independently and young homeless and some good improvements eg supported housing, better frontline response. However early intervention / prevention and support to help young people move out of homelessness needs strengthened. Numbers of young people impacted as fairly static, small increase in those aged 16+ though concern some not picked up in statistics eg ‘sofa surfing’ and those in temporary arrangements. Noted that young people can become more visible in official figures when they present to services aged 18/19 years. The impact of difficulties of housing problems into adulthood and need for more support when young people leave supported accommodation also noted.
* Discussion that welfare reform may result in increase in housing problems / homelessness.
* Impact of paramilitary threats and intimidation on housing problems noted, including the increased difficulties in young people then accessing supported housing and their isolation from family and friends. Important that the Children and young person’s strategy reflects recent history and the legacy of the conflict, this should be acknowledged across a number of outcome areas including those related to mental health and housing as well as safety and stability.
* Connections between poverty and the conflict raised and the impact of this on children and young people.
* Disability: lack of adequate suitable housing and impact of this on children’s dignity eg 16 year old with muscular dystrophy living in living room with no private space (and no communal space for the family). Barriers to housing for young people with learning disability or mental health difficulties eg challenges of private rented sector, affordability, multiple occupancy properties not appropriate.
* Lack of good housing stock.

**Barriers to basic needs being met**

* Fuel poverty in NI at 42% of homes 4 years ago (will now be lower re drop in oil and electricity prices); food poverty around one third of household income spent on food; access to transport particularly in rural areas and impact on children’s lives even for essentials like travel to school.
* Increased needs of households with a disability noted eg no choice about requiring extra heating, or not working and being in receipts of benefits/support in order to care for a child.
* Noted NI also has higher rate of people without a bank account, associated concern about vulnerability to pay day and high interest loans, loan sharks and paramilitaries. Discussion on strengthening Credit Unions/community banks with reference to Consumer Council pilot on affordable credit and underwritten scheme in Derry. Community oil buying schemes also highlighted.
* Concerns about potential of welfare reform to increase the need for unregulated loans across vulnerable groups highlighted, eg Social Care grant now a discretionary loan, impact of sanctions on families.
* Impact of moves to online welfare services and particular barriers for young people and families with disabilities, mental health problems, literacy difficulties, poor online access.

**Childcare**

* Lack of strategic direction in childcare provision/strategy, increased costs faced by childcare providers (eg minimum wage, pension enrolment), previous hopes that a social enterprise model of providers would develop but this has not happened. Reference made to levels of provision in England eg 30 hours of pre school.
* Employers for Childcare survey showed increases in parents cutting back on food and fuel bills and using pay day loans to pay childcare costs. Highlighted that the choice is to do this or come out of paid employment.

**Costs associated with education**

* Education and costs of school discussed eg uniform costs, school trips, pressure on families to fundraise/contribute for school resources and equipment, non uniform days, stigma and consequent reluctance to take up FSM, multiple costs if more than one child attending, impact on children not being able to fully participate in all school activities if costs not covered.

**Measures to increase household incomes/reduce costs**

* Funds families can access eg uniforms and trips, seasonal grants.
* Support for young people and families to make sure they are accessing all benefits eg all Universal Credit they are entitled to (as per older persons ‘make the call’ campaign).
* Gender differences in adolescence noted eg uniform and food costs re boys.
* Recognition of role of carers and parent carers.
* Overcoming barriers for particular groups eg care leavers and pre vocational support, practical and financial barriers for 16 and 17 year olds, measures for those over 21 years losing HSCT financial support. GEM extended foster carer scheme given as a good example.
* Need for better transition services that provide graduated transition beyond 18/21 – for all young people where they have support needs – not just those who have a disability or are care experienced.
* Vulnerability of newcomer children and families highlighted eg language barriers, circumstances where there is no recourse to public funds, example where a child in an emergency situation died.
* Concerns include receiving child benefit up to 17 years but reduction in tax credits, young people with disabilities not accessing job seekers allowance, living wage inequality, concern that housing benefit may be removed from those under 25 years.
* Discussed increasing the usefulness of food banks eg standardise packages, include recipe cards.
* EMA for pre vocational training.

**Environment**

* Green spaces, community allotment.
* Concerns that children are playing in more restricted ways and geographical places than previously. Links with parental concerns about children being safe, increases in traffic etc.
* Young people and barriers to using and enjoying public space.
* Economic barrier to children and young people having opportunities to explore and engage with the environment beyond their immediate community. Barriers to more vulnerable groups eg poverty, disability.
* Role of pets

Civic Society ‘Economic and Environmental Well-Being’ Workshop: Priorities

**Support families to meet basic needs**

* Economic impact on children i.e. inability to meet basic needs – housing heating food.
* Families having to decide whether to eat or heat home.
* Bring back maternity grant
* Costs of basic needs

**Provide accessible, affordable transport**

* Access to affordable community related transport similar to NDACT for young people i.e. state funded. Mini buses/people carriers for economically deprived young people.
* Impact of reduced public transport for children & young people esp. rural

**Address the costs of education**

* Making education and all school activities free for children & young people.
* Impact of the unseen costs in education - trips, uniforms , activities
* Fund that parents can apply to for extracurricular educational opportunities, music, sport, etc…
* Free school day
* Increased monitoring and review of Education Board in relation to how they ensure confidentially of pupils accessing free school meals.

**Families at higher risk of poverty**

* Families with disabled children

**Particular needs of vulnerable young people**

* Transitional support for vulnerable young people -18-21.
* Accurate data relating to 16+ homelessness and those who suffer from paramilitary intimidation.
* Need to recognize particular vulnerable groups such as young people in our leaving care.
* Young people
* Communicating and listening to the needs of young people
* Address the financial structural barriers to young people “who are out of home” accessing or maintaining work education & training
* Recognition of the distinct challenges & barriers faced by young people, who are homeless, outside of family – including impact on family, housing work community opps.
* EMA paid to all 16+ people staying on at school, attending college or training for success. Get young people on pre vocational schemes are not entitled to this. Reinstate EMA to young people ESF schemes.
* Transitional periods help post 18, 21

**Childcare**

* Childcare costs and the impact this has on families what would solve this issue?
* Lack of free affordable childcare. – Economic impact on parents – developmental impact for children.
* Affordable childcare

**Equality and poverty**

* More equality for working poor
* Access to services – equality.
* Equality in Welfare
* Need for parents to be informed if support/benefits available.
* Educating parents.

**Raise awareness of support available**

* Promotion of existing financial support to families.

**Need to work together to tackle child poverty**

* Communication with all from top levels right across – Children, young people, parents, government etc…

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Economic and Environmental Well-Being’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

***Environmental well-being:***

**Access to nature, and to green spaces is seen as important to children and young people**

* There should be more access to gardens / green space in the city and children should be made aware of where food comes from
* Police need to be tougher on littering and imposing fines - pollution
* Stricter rules should be in place for damaging parks.
* More drug awareness is needed - problems of children finding needles.

There was also a feeling that government is not sufficiently prioritising the protection of the environment, and the promotion of measures such as renewable energy. However, some also felt that there is a growing awareness of global warming.

* There should be more consideration of the balance between economic advantage and the environmental impact / benefit of renewable energy
* Young people are the future generation and should have the vote at 16 so they can participate in decisions about their future, in particular the environment.
* There is a perception that people are taking more notice of environmental degradation - there is more awareness of global warming. This is covered in school.
* There should be greater subsidies for public transport, off-set by tax on emissions

They felt that there was a lot of waste in the system, including energy and money

* Schools waste energy – for example in lighting. They should all have alternative energy such as solar panels etc.
* Concern about how government prioritises what it spends its money on: “government wastes money on things like the EU referendum”.
* Money should be distributed more equally between government departments – the environment is not given the same priority in government action and resources as other issues.

They argued that, if children were taught at an early age about protecting the environment, this would lead to a culture change within society.

* Environmental policies should be explained to younger children (like Sweden does) so it becomes the norm to protect the environment.

***Economic well-being:***

**Homeless children and young people**

* Homeless young people were a concern.
* Council houses should be safe and not damp – inadequate housing can lead to having to move frequently and cause disruption to schooling.
* More needs to be done to help homeless people (they are like ‘ghosts’) and stigmatised.
* Very concerned about death rates among homeless people – empty buildings should be opened up for use.
* Homeless young people should get additional education support.
* More mental health support is needed to stop people becoming homeless.

**Basic needs**

* Some were concerned about rising food prices – for school meals in particular, costs have doubled yet there are fewer choices. Breakfast clubs cost has also risen and this puts pressure on families.

**Poverty and education**

* School uniform is too expensive – some schools give detention for wearing old PE kits or hoodies on the way to school.
* The premium given to schools for children on FSMs should be used to benefit those particular children for things like school trips etc.
* School trips are really expensive which is a shame because they are a really good experience and help children develop socially. This can cause divisions at school.
* Bus passes are allocated unfairly – the measurement should be for the school you go to, not the nearest one (it isn’t always your choice).
* Young people experience a lot of pressure to get good grades.
* Young people should get more teaching on financial management.

Some youth panel members were very concerned at the changes to benefits, at problems with benefit payments and the minimum wage levels for young people.

* the minimum wage for under 21s isn’t fair – some had concerns that people would leave school if the minimum wage was higher. Benefits are lower for young people.
* Cuts to benefits is a concern – particularly changes to DLA levels for mobility / mental illness.
* There should be no delay to receiving child benefit for those over 16 and still in full time education - they are sometimes delayed while proof is obtained to show that they have gone back to school.

There were concerns that careers in the army are being promoted to young people who are less academic than others, or who are living in poverty. There was a feeling that this was inappropriate.

* Joining the army can be promoted among young people who are not as academic as others. Society should care about their needs - for example mental health services.
* War is desensitised (eg advertising army in schools and on TV – seen as propaganda). Perception that young people are encouraged to join the army to avoid poverty. Several gave examples where the bottom steams in schools were targeted by army recruiters.
* It’s unjust that you have to be 18 to vote but can join the army at 16 .

There was an awareness of the impact of austerity on delivering on children’s rights

* More facilities for young people - those that are available now are too costly.
* “If a Rights abuse is found it should just be dealt with no matter what the cost”.

Some felt that more needed to be done to raise people’s awareness of poverty in NI

* There should be more awareness of what poverty means - people may have money in their pockets but not in the bank. It should be explained to children that poverty doesn’t necessarily mean you are homeless - there are some people who have a bit of money or even jobs but not enough to live off properly.

Finally, there were concerns raised that children could be exploited to make money

* Children can be exploited for economic gain (eg making money from a child without them knowing).

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Economic and Environmental Well-Being’ Workshop: Priorities and Additional Notes[[2]](#footnote-2)

***Environmental well-being:***

**Consider rights of future generations**

* Future generations considered in environmental decisions.
* Consider next generation when making environmental decisions.
* *Future generation.*
* *Future generation – decide own future.*
* *Future generations are considered when environmental or economic decisions are made.*

**Improve access to green spaces**

* Green spaces & council houses.
* More green spaces.
* A large range of green areas for children.
* *More green spaces in communities.*
* *Gardens in council houses.*

**Reduce littering**

* More fines on litter.
* Littering – Punishment and awareness.
* Littering.
* Harsher littering laws.
* *Litter – more fines.*
* *Littering in tough areas.*
* *Litter fines should be enforced more.*
* *Police tougher on littering.*
* *Keeping parks clean.*
* *Stricter punishments for (littering in) parks.*
* *Punishment and awareness for littering.*

**Save energy, reduce carbon emissions and promote renewable energy**

* Encouraging usage - more renewable.
* Sustainable resources.
* Reducing carbon.
* Saving energy.
* *Solar panels.*
* *Energy wasted in school – lights.*
* *Energy lights.*
* *Eco – solar panels.*
* *Energy wasted in school.*
* *Solar panels.*
* *Address energy wasted, promote alternative energy sources, e.g. solar panels.*
* *Wasting energy.*
* *More equal balance on environment.*
* *More equal balance of money to all departments in the government.*

**Raise awareness of environmental change, including with children**

* Awareness of environment poverty should start younger.
* *Education on environment saving items (e.g. windmills, is it worth it?).*
* *Education on global warming.*
* *Environmental policies explained earlier.*
* *Explain environmental problems to children.*
* *Explain environmental problems to people at young age.*
* *(Education on) food and where comes from.*

***Economic well-being:***

**Addressing low incomes**

* Balance/prioritisation of money distribution.
* Benefits.
* Wages.
* *More money in smaller towns.*
* *Minimum wage.*
* *Benefits.*
* *Money split evenly.*
* *Money given for certain purposes should be used for those purposes.*

**Support to meet basic needs**

* Cost of basic household necessities.
* Public transport needs to be funded and publicised.
* *More money for facilities for young people.*
* *Cost of basic necessities are going up.*
* *Rising food prices – cost of meals.*
* *Rising food costs meals.*

**Raising awareness of child poverty**

* Explaining poverty to children.
* Increased awareness of poverty.
* *More awareness of poverty.*
* *Raising awareness.*
* *Explain poverty/more awareness.*
* *Explain poverty – awareness.*

**Address homelessness, particularly among young people**

* Attitudes to the homeless need to change.
* Homelessness.
* Homelessness and Mental Health.
* Young homeless people.
* Help ex-soldiers.
* Stigma against homelessness.
* Open up abandoned buildings.
* *Young people homeless.*
* *Army help soldiers after (leaving) army.*

**Problems with conditions of council houses**

* State of council housing.
* *State of council houses – health hazard.*
* *Council houses should be safe and damp free – should only be moved if happy, or child is at risk by moving.*
* *Better council houses – health hazards.*
* *State of council houses.*

**Address poverty in schools**

* Food prices in schools.
* Food in schools.
* School costs reduced – Uniform food bus passes school trips.
* Extra money given to schools because of higher % of disadvantaged pupils needs to be spent on those pupils.
* Uniform costs.
* Costs of school trips disadvantage people.
* Grades.
* *Uniform expensive.*
* *School uniform is too expensive.*
* *School uniform too expensive.*
* *Uniforms etc.*
* *Uniform too pricey.*
* *School trips – good but pricey.*
* *Cost of school trips.*
* *Bus passes – nearest school.*
* *Rising food prices in school.*
* *Rising (costs of) school meals.*
* *Rising food prices (school).*
* *In schools, money given to the school for disadvantaged pupils needs to be shown. to be spent on those pupils.*
* *Education on money.*
* *Work experience.*

**Promotion of careers in army to young people**

* Army propaganda.
* Army promoted to young people seen as failures.

**General points**

* Support of young people who may be disadvantaged.
* Giving everyone equal opportunity.
* *Children shouldn’t be exploited for economical gain.*
* *Children shouldn’t be exploited for economic gain.*

Outcome 6: Making a Positive Contribution to Society

Feedback from Civic Society Workshop

Civic Society ‘Making a Positive Contribution to Society’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

Areas which the Workshop focused on include the appropriateness of the inclusion of youth justice as an area within the heading of, “Making a Positive Contribution to Society”. It was felt that, given the profile of children and young people in the criminal justice system, youth justice would be more appropriately placed under the heading of, ‘Living in Safety and with Stability’. The participation of children was also considered in this workshop under this outcome area. The issues discussed can be broken down as follows:-

**Volunteering**

* Societal attitudes towards young people are negative, especially if they are different, strategy should respect them.
* Knowing how to engage with children and young people especially where participation is more difficult.
* Insurance issue for those aged under 16yrs – Extra support mechanism can be put in place – Volunteers not being prioritised – Too easy to find excuses.
* Some young people cannot volunteer because of insurance issues
* Youth Work, 92% of this is done by volunteers.
* Valuing the work children and young people offer through volunteering.
* Participation and volunteering really important. Such a positive thing for children and young people.
* Volunteering can have a positive impact on reducing crime i.e. Act as a diversionary exercise/activity.
* Remove barriers to volunteering i.e. time.
* Young people should be able to volunteer and participate in mentoring
* Community focus - What is being offered for young people in ensuring they can make a positive contribution?

**Youth Justice**

* Young people on remand / bail – shouldn’t happen.
* Custody should be a measure of last resort.
* Need evidenced based practice in justice of what works.
* We shouldn’t have a justice response to what are Social Care needs.
* Specific demographic group that is most at risk of offending.
* Disability often not understood when come into contact with criminal justice system – not medically diagnosed – mild to moderate learning disability.
* Health & Social Care response needed to youth offending, especially when have autism etc. – Training needed across all professionals.
* Accommodation – Lack of Resources, Lack of alternatives.
* Community focus - What is being offered for young people to prevent offending?
* What do we do to make children and young people who are in a pattern of offending? Need to focus on intervention.
* Children in criminal justice system contradicts itself if it sits in positive contribution outcome Placing it here may be a useful wellbeing parameter if one thinks about re-imaging criminal justice.
* Best interests of children – paramount.
* Youth Justice impacts across all parameters.

***Specific Groups of Children and Young people:***

**Young Carers**

* Young Carers – Fits into Family Matters Strategy.
* How do you identify them?
* Young people don’t identify themselves as carer’s.
* Siblings need support where their brother/sister has a disability or is getting into trouble.
* Not recognised by statutory services – DLA focused on the person with disability.
* Carers allowance can’t apply to children and young people.
* Young careers have to abandon their education – abandon their rights.
* Respite is the best on offer for children and young people – rather than whole structural change – needs resourcing.
* Family support needed for New Carer Children – so children can remain focused on being a child.

**Children in poverty**

* Rural Young people.
* Impact of welfare reform.
* More expensive to bring up a children and young people with disability.
* How do you define poverty? Poverty is changing - 52% of families in poverty have 1 parent who is working.
* Contact a Family – survey showing the spike in needs of families – heating, eating, food banks.

**SEND**

* Irish speakers / Irish med schools – SEND educational psychologists can’t speak to child so assessments gaps in services – Irish medium youth speakers.

**EAL**

* Children who don’t have English as a first language – need to assist their ability to participate fully in society.

**RAS Children**

* Gap in knowledge in relation to Asylum seeking children & unaccompanied children.

**Minority Groups of Children and Young people**

* Children and young people with rare conditions or members of a small population are invisible in society, especially low incidence groups.
* Need for training and support systems to ensure they are allowed to participate. In England have forums so that this can be put in place.
* Roma/Traveller children.
* Children with life limiting conditions.
* Amenities - Children living longer with life limiting conditions need amenities that are suitable as they get older.

**Participation**

* Recognising children as experts of their own experience and what is affecting their lives.
* How we understand participation?
* Doesn’t have to be formal.
* Is there sharing of good procedures in understanding marginalised CYOUNG PEOPLE.
* Giving Youth Work as equal status to education.
* Some things are very difficult to measure – i.e. changes in mindset.
* Schools are taking on youth based values, including citizenship.
* Sometimes evidence is available – but not making an impact.

**Government / Children and young person’s strategy**

* Internships & placements should come under making a Positive Contribution – everything should be measureable.
* Do We Have The Right Structures? – How often do children and young people get to speak to politicians?
* children and young people being part of governance. – School. Councils/participation feeding upwards – Models of good practice.
* Is there a need for Youth Parliament? Not priority for government.
* Child Heart Surgery has developed an interesting model of engagement between politicians, decision makers and service users – Core Groups, Family engagement group.
* Dept & Agencies aren’t working together – don’t share information.
* All party group for children and young people exists but it needs reinvigorated – Need delegation for them to attend.
* Community planning – Long way off linking with strategies such as children and young people’s strategy.
* Local Authorities fall under CSCA.
* OFMDFM should work with Community planning Officers and the CYPSP.
* Training & Knowledge of behavioural issues – P2 child expelled from school.
* Children and young people need to be involved in this process and this needs to be representative and ongoing.

**NICCY’S Role in the Development of the Children and young person’s strategy**

* Informing policy – Can come & talk to NICCY about issues.
* NICCY going out and speaking to others – Regional.
* What power does NICCY have as recourse if government doesn’t deliver on actions from the strategy?

Civic Society ‘Making a Positive Contribution to Society’ Workshop: Priorities

With regard to ‘Making a Positive Contribution to Society’, the priority areas identified by participants were:

**Volunteering**

* Young people need volunteering opportunities.
* Recognition of the work done by young volunteers in their communities assisting them in doing so.
* Parental support is vital to ensure young people are engaged and raise their awareness of how children can make a positive contribution to society.
* Value and recognition for volunteering by children and young people.
* Children and young people with disabilities as part of any volunteering initiative with funding.
* Young carers need to be considered and have same opportunities to volunteer.
* Young carers.
* Importance of volunteering in delivering services for young people.
* Improve training and support for young volunteers.
* Opportunities for sharing good practice re: youth steering group and forums.

**Youth Justice**

* Welfare / Social response to children offending, not Justice.
* Preventive measures in reducing in rates of offending.
* Reviewing diversionary tactics for young people who offend (youth conferences through court process are active on criminal record).
* Accommodation for young offenders.
* Equality for young people in justice system who have identified learning needs.

**Government / Children and young person’s strategy**

* Government held to account for their support of young people.
* Co-production / co-operation.
* Ongoing communication and co-operation between Depts, agencies and voluntary organisations.
* Linking and communicating with local groups on how they can help young people to positively contribute.
* Clear government accountability on outcomes. Establish and invest in structures to deliver outcomes. Young people’s involvement.
* Change takes time and needs support on an ongoing basis and some joined up thinking.
* Engage with the agencies that support children and young people.
* More voice of young people in Government decisions.
* Youth assembly and associated capacity building support and facilitation as a ‘governance’ body of NI Government.
* Cross dept accountability in relation to the Children’s 10 yr Strategy.
* Funding to empower youths programme.
* Issues around training for child protection- massive cuts in training resources- focus on innovative not mainstream needs. Change in structures e.g. Education Authority- things are getting missed.
* Mainstreaming of language issues throughout all depts. i.e. access to Irish language services.
* Young people’s access to decision makers- accountability.
* Evidence based approaches with long term investment.
* Having children and young people part of key decision making.
* Involvement of children and young people throughout the process, in particular, children and young people with disabilities. These should include monitoring and evaluation.
* Active participation of children and young people in all aspects of their lives.
* A named responsible person to oversee the joint working approach to ensure consistency, good practice etc. is shared.
* Treat young people as experts in their own needs etc.
* Ask, involve and engage with young people.
* Investment in innovative programs that assist and help facilitate opportunities for young people, in particular in community development needs.
* Inclusion for all young people.
* Ensure voices of children and young people are heard and acted upon.
* Provide training opportunities for children and young people on participation.
* Promote inclusivity effectively and encompass all.
* Addressing awareness of minority groups and how they can be supported.
* Ensuring youth work outside of formal education is treated as important as within the school setting.

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Making a Positive Contribution to Society’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Volunteering**

* Easy to get access to volunteering, but they give you responsibility but it’s taken away again.
* There shouldn’t be harsh restrictions on whether you can volunteer because you. have a disability.
* Charities actively discouraged and are against young people getting involved.
* St John’s Ambulance – good practice organisation, children and young people can volunteer there from 7 years old and its really good, you get really involved and get lots of training and support.

**Voting Age**

* Voting is a problem.
* Voting ages should be 16 as we can work, have sex, drink...
* Some thought 14 age was too young, some thought it was ok to vote at 14.
* If schools do what they should do young people should be skilled enough to know the issues to vote on.
* Should be more chance in school to encourage young people to vote or learn about what politics means.

**Youth Justice**

* Should be more understanding of why those young people commit crimes.

**Age Discrimination in Accessing GFS**

* Lots of examples of when young people were treated badly or ask to leave shops, i.e. New Look, Westwood Shopping Centre, McDonalds.

**Lack of Things for Young people to Do**

* Nowhere to go for young people.
* Young people going to unsafe places, i.e. The Meadows/The River/Falls. Park/Helens Bay Beach. Young people get drunk, high etc and put themselves at risk.
* Young people want to set up their own spaces – they have the best ideas ‘we need more opportunities to do this’.

**Schools Councils**

* An overwhelming **no** they didn’t feel they had a real contribution in Schools Councils or were listened to.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Making a Positive Contribution to Society’ Workshop: Priorities

With regard to ‘Making a Positive Contribution to Society’, the priority areas identified by the NYP were:

**Volunteering**

* More advertising for volunteering opportunities.
* More opportunities to volunteer through schools.
* Volunteering easier to access!
* In schools, promote volunteering opportunities.
* Schools should raise awareness / organise volunteering.
* Volunteering isn’t advertised.
* Volunteering should be more known of.
* Volunteering should be advertised more.
* Volunteering more available.

**Voting Age**

* Voting age lowered now please, no really.
* Lower voting age to 16.
* Votes for age 16/ 17!
* Lower voting age to 16.
* Legal age of voting should be 16.
* Lower voting age to 16.
* Lower voting age.
* Voting should be reduced in age.
* Voting should be 16- at this age you are allowed to have a baby, get married, rent a house, work (pay taxes).
* Lower voting age to 16!!
* The voting age should be brought down - 14 is too low though, 16 would be better.
* Voting age down.
* Future generations decide own future.

**Discrimination**

* Fix age GFS.
* Shop managers shouldn’t be allowed to remove young people without evidence they’re misbehaving.
* Stop age discrimination.
* Age discrimination need to stop, mosquito devices, school kids not being allowed into shops and police men need to stop

**Youth Justice**

* Age of criminal responsibility is so low it’s a joke.
* Get better understanding of why children commit crime.
* Projects in schools for volunteering, potentially instead of games/ PE or free periods.
* More awareness for volunteering for young people.
* More facilities for young people so that they don’t have to resort to criminal activity to socialise.
* More understanding is needed on why young people commit crime.
* The age limit for criminal responsibility should be increased.
* The criminal age of responsibility should be raised to 16, when we’re seen as part of society.
* Age of CR raised.
* Depending on the crime, children should be evaluated.
* Young people are criminalised.
* Raise the age of criminal responsibility.
* Age of criminal responsibility should be up to 14.

**Lack of Things for Young people to Do**

* More places for young people to go.
* More community centres.
* That there should be places to go.
* More places for kids to go.
* More resources for socialising.

**Environment**

* Energy wasted in schools.
* Explain environmental problems.
* More emphasis needed on respecting the environment and services.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Making a Positive Contribution to Society’ Workshop: Additional Notes

**Volunteering and Voting**

* Can’t volunteer if you’re not interested, don’t know about it.
* Voting should be lowered to 16.
* DOE.
* Need to be a certain age to volunteer.
* Not encouraged to volunteer.
* Stigma around teens.
* More understanding why kids commit crimes.
* Volunteering.
* Lack of choice/responsibility.
* Little time.
* Need to be aware of benefits.
* Schools could organise charity shop.
* Voting age – 16.
* SJA volunteering.
* Age discrimination – thrown out of shops/places.
* Volunteering.

**Justice**

* Don’t punish children.
* Keep in contact.
* Legal help and fair treatment.
* Negative stereotyping against some children.
* Raised awareness of how to be involved.
* If they were told about the benefits such as responsibility.
* Schools should organise for pupils to have the opportunity to volunteer.
* More opportunities/ads to appeal for volunteer.
* Voting age changed.
* Volunteering in the community helps the society.
* More schemes that give you a chance to contribute to society.
* More outside of school chances/opportunities to help/volunteer.
* Schools.
* More community centres etc, for people to go and to be able to socialise with friends.
* Age should be brought up to 14.
* More understanding of why they committed crime.
* Some volunteering is 18+ - we should have the chance.
* Voting age should be 16 – can have child at 16, married at 16, house at 16 but can’t vote.
* Should respect environment and services.
* Promote well-being.
* Article 12 – actively listening.
* Article 37 - No-one should be treated unfairly.
* Lack of respect of PSNI and young people (vice versa).
* Age discrimination.
* GFS.
* Volunteering.
* Youth Justice.
* 2008 – Legislation of YJ.
* Jamie Bulger.

Outcome 7: Living in a Society which Respects their Rights

Feedback from Civic Society Workshop

Civic Society ‘Living in a Society which Respects their Rights’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**The children and young person’s strategy and its critical role**

* The National Action Plan for the implementation of the UNCRC is the children and young people strategy.
* There needs to be direct communication between children and young people and Head of Civil Service.
* How does the children and young people strategy align with other strategies i.e. disability strategy, autism strategy?
* There could be as many as 20 strategies that could fit under the children and young people strategy.

**Article 12 - children and young people’s rights to have a say in decision affecting them**

* Need to engage with children and young people in ways that empower them, consultations are not child friendly.
* We need to hear children and young people voices from rural areas.
* Participation is about facilitation, that is a process, it is a capacity building process- there isn’t enough investment.
* Engagement can happen through existing organisations on the ground. How do these orgs get the ear of the policy maker. Orgs need to have knowledge about where to go to speak to policy influencers.

**Article 12 and children and young people with disabilities**

* Children and young people with complex needs are not being asked for their views- too difficult. A Good practice example is where Barnardos Sixth Sense project are developing training materials for hospital staff.
* QUB Research on wellbeing of children and young people with disabilities- those who participate have much better wellbeing i.e. confidence, self esteem, resilience.
* Sixth Sense children and young people go out and give training to professionals, professionals get emotional.
* Professionals can come with preconceived ideas of ability and aren’t prepared to engage with children and young people.
* Children and young people who are used to participation in children’s services don’t get that in adult services- adult services aren’t participatory.

**Article 13: access to information**

* There needs to be as much focus on Article 13 as there is on Article 12- it often gets forgotten.
* Data protection Act will be changing in 2 years, this relates to protection, information and privacy rights. Young people up to a certain age (to be clarified) will be required to get parental consent before accessing some social media. There is a citizen rights forum being set up.

**Language rights**

* Children and young people don’t feel their rights are being heard. In the media, Irish language is often not being portrayed in a positive way. There needs to be awareness of how this affects irish speaking children and young people - including those in Irish medium schools. Irish Lang is part of their identity. This can create isolation between communities.
* The primary school programme has been scrapped which shows the little importance it has by politicians. The big focus in NI is in developing English, more emphasis needs to be placed on a child first language.
* Young people should not be expected to as an interpreter for their parents, this is particularly inappropriate when dealing with sensitive, personal matters. An interpreter can cost £120 a hour.
* There needs to be greater co-ordination and co-working between language communities.
* Makaton is a language that needs to be recognised and developed. Children and young people who need communication devices are getting them too late, as Depts. can’t agree on whose responsibility it is.
* Polish communities- culture rights, language rights, need to preserve their native language. For LAC children, their foster carers may be English speaking but their families only speak polish, so they have communication problems with their birth parents.

**Awareness of rights by children and their advocates**

* Do children and young people know their rights, how can they exercise them if they don’t know them?
* They don’t know their rights until something goes wrong, it needs to be engrained from an early age, there also needs to be parental capacity to educate a child on their right.

**Children’s rights in the school systems**

* There is an important role for advocates- including a parent support worker- someone aligned to the school system but not part of it.
* Child rights need to be enshrined in system- some schools are better than others.
* Teachers need it to be imbedded in their work.
* Child rights should be in the curriculum- schools should ‘live and breathe it’

**Systems and services aren’t child-focussed or child-friendly**

* Systems don’t work around the child- the time they are available, the space- it’s an adult world.
* Statutory services in general are not child centred.
* Participation champions in the system are lost.
* LAC Reviews are not child friendly.
* Family support hubs are amazing.

**Resourcing the Children and Young People’s Strategy / pooling resources**

* Need for more efficient use of services.
* Need to know how money is being spent first.
* Co-operation should inevitably lead to efficiency.

**Gathering data and demonstrating impact**

* Omnibus surveys are cheaper to buy but they only start at 16+, and often ask for the head of the household.
* RQIA have limited data on children and young people MH services or children and young people with disabilities.
* There are issues with access to data.
* Indicators are incredibly important.
* Showing impact is difficult for CVS- the expectation needs to be proportionate.

Civic Society ‘Living in a Society which Respects their Rights’ Workshop: Priorities

**Participation**

* To facilitate improved participation of children. – Could there be a directory of youth panels/councils groups who invite consultation.
* Consultation with young people in an appropriate way.

**Raising awareness, supporting parents**

* Communication on rights. If parents are well informed then they can communicate with their children.
* Parents are important in children’s lives and their first educators.
* Childs rights to know and understand their rights around education, play etc…
* How to raise awareness of young people’s rights. – What is the most effective way to do this?
* Don’t forget youth sector for raising awareness not just formalised school setting.

**Improving access to information**

* More joined up working with NICCY & ICO regarding the right for young people to access their information or information from public authorities.
* ICO will be setting up a Citizens Rights Forum – Perhaps NICCY would be interested in representing rights of children with regard to privacy and right to access data.
* Incorporate Article 13 UNCRC to enable young people to participate.

**Transparency of spending on children**

* Budgeting
* Administration costs in education could go to funding services & Training

**Improving data collection**

* Data collection needs improved right now.
* Centralised (gov’t) assisted evaluation tools to help with budgeting/impact measurement.

**Recognise and realise language rights**

* “White” incorporates a large and diverse group of different national groups - Polish, Lithuanian Czech etc….
* BME children do have access to effective programmes helping them to catch up with English and participate in the curriculum.
* Making provisions in the NI legislation to enable others than – English or Irish medium education.
* Communicate with child where they are in their language/sign etc….
* Children & young people confident in their identity are better equipped to contribute to their community & society.
* Rights of children include language & identity rights and these must be respected.

**NICCY’s role**

* NICCY should partner with all agencies working with children and young people.

**Incorporation**

* Incorporate UNCRPD Article & Definition of disability.

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Living in a Society which Respects their Rights’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

The discussion came at the end of a long day of workshops. Consequently there were fewer participants and a more limited discussion.

**The National Action Plan for Children - the Children and young person’s strategy**

* The structure should focus on the most severe problems.
* Set interim targets and review these to adjust as necessary.
* Make realistic promises.

**Raising awareness**

* Tell children!.
* Use Assemblies.
* Don’t just give a talk on rights, use activities.
* Don’t just do it once, repeat.
* Quite often done as part of Learning for Life and Work - this is not necessarily the best approach.

**Children’s budgeting**

* Children’s budgeting is important.

**Children’s Commissioner**

* She should have more profile.
* She should have more access to government, and attend meetings.
* She needs a cape!

**Participation**

* Participation is vital.
* Voting at 16.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Living in a Society which Respects their Rights’ Workshop: Priorities and Additional Points

**The Children’s Commissioner**

* Attend meetings.
* Cape.
* More profile.
* Children’s Commissioner: More profile, more access to govt.

**Raising awareness of rights including with parents**

* More profile for children’s rights.
* Awareness.
* Compulsory rights (education).
* Tell children about rights – Not talking, not just once, possibly in LLW class.
* Awareness to parents and the young people about rights.
* Parent meetings with Government.
* Make sure parents are aware.
* Awareness: Assemblies not talks, compulsory.

**Voting at 16**

* Younger age voting.
* Voting at 16.
* Voting rights 16.
* Voting age 16+.
* Voting at 16.
* Voting – gives you a right to complain.
* Education on voting.
* Voting age = 16+ !!!.
* Voting at 16.

**Participation**

* More opportunities (for participation).

**The Children and young person’s strategy**

* Structure & prioritise.
* Structure.
* NAP – Children Strategy: Structure, focus on more severe problems, make realistic promises.

**Children’s budgeting**

* Budgeting.

Outcome 8: Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations

Feedback from Civic Society Workshop

Civic Society ‘Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

Areas which the Workshop focused on include what is meant by ‘equality and good relations’, particularly in light of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Article 2 of the UNCRC. The issues discussed can be broken down as follows:-

**Consultation**

* Importance of hearing children’s voices, concern this not achieved through Section 75.
* Fresh Start introduction of an 8 week maximum consultation period and ECNI current consultation on timescales discussed, concerns about ensuring vulnerable groups are consulted in a restricted timeframe expressed (e.g. time and resources needed for alternative formats, interpreter service).
* Experiences of poor consultation practice discussed, including children’s versions being issued post consultation and poor pre- consultation engagement.
* Lack of structured mechanism to enable children and young people to engage.
* Some examples of good engagement also noted e.g. TBUC and consultation with victims and survivors which helped ‘tweak’ the programme and ensure focus on delivery to communities; DEL disability employment strategy including pre and public consultation where feedback shaped the final document; OFMDFM Turn of the Century engagement with children.
* Concern that pressure on resources will impact government’s ability to consult ‘hard to reach’ groups.
* Need for public authorities to sequence strategies, action plans etc. and timeline work, developments and engagement.
* Opportunity in Children and young person’s strategy to build in accountability, to trigger ‘sub strategies’ coming into line and improve coordination between different areas.

**Education**

* Discussion on potential of this outcome under the Children and young person’s strategy, including in relation to schools.
* Importance of educating children and young people together.
* Segregated education must be addressed.
* Ability: special schools, transport and being ‘bused’ and educated out of the local area and community; school enrolment figures not including children with disability/SEN.
* Education and concern about arbitrary nature of enrolment numbers e.g. 105 pupils in primary school not appropriate in rural areas.
* Needing to think creatively about addressing issues e.g. role of schools and earliest stage interventions can be put in place to support children and young people.

**Legacy of the Conflict**

* Paramilitarism and the conflict: raised in NICCYs YVM, importance of oral history and ethical remembering highlighted; how to ensure young people can access ‘fact based’ information discussed and resources like Incore noted.
* Segregated teacher training and difficulties associated with this.
* Supporting parents and whole school approaches that address identity, heritage and history.
* Good practice of community relations in schools, working with nursery children noted; sensitivity and skills required for this acknowledged. Needing to identify the transgenerational impact and Fresh Start obligation re the legacy of the conflict on children raised; noted that NICCY should seek to maximise this.
* Need to recognise that children have different experiences, live in different communities, different actions needed for different young people depending on their needs.
* Where the conflict sits within the Strategy discussed – affects everything, across all outcomes, speaks to broader dynamics in society of power, vested interests.
* Question of how to depoliticise key issues such as education, health and housing, these is a sense that NI has focused only on depoliticising policing and justice but not other key areas such as health.

**Equality**

* Potential of focus on equality to highlight needs of children with disabilities and carers.
* Opportunity to ensure discrimination against children is addressed.
* Need to think about equality and diversity very seriously in the context of this obligation.
* Information and evidence gathering and lack of good data following /in spite of Section 75 obligations.
* Absence of poverty as a recognised characteristic and limitations of this.
* Transgender children and young people.
* Traveller and Roma children.
* Multiple identities that children have - not single issue e.g. disability and sexual orientation.
* Concern about discrimination from the point of birth and cultural aspect to this e.g. gender, disability. People with disabilities are still less likely to be in public life, appointed to boards, public appointments despite legislation to address this.
* Disconnect between age, ability and education.
* Young carers.
* Young people in need of employment, education or training.
* Children with mental health needs.
* Poverty – also connection with welfare reform and housing.
* Children who have health needs.
* The media do not highlight good news stories e.g. YLT 51% young people feel they make a positive contribution to bringing their community together. Query if BBC could be a ‘children’s service provider’; obligation in relation to negative stereotyping; noted some research correlates negative reporting on people with disabilities as ‘scroungers’ and increases in hate crime. Also, disabled people can be portrayed as heroes, both are extremes and unrepresentative.
* Newcomer and BME children and families, time needed to build relationships and give basis for engagement raised.

**Good Relations**

* Discussed good relations and possibilities of broadening this out from OFMDFM remit to include other fora.
* Concerns about impact of austerity raised including loss of smaller grassroots groups (often those with access to ‘hard to reach’ groups); impact of reduced capacity for advocacy (e.g. not able to support individuals/groups accessing help from charities or others); groups seeking funding from other pots (e.g. council for CRED support); at same time as increased demand on organisations due to welfare changes (e.g. PIPS and disability groups). This will have a significant impact on good relations work at a community level.
* Concern about lack of joined up working and collaboration; community and voluntary sector spending more time seeking and then reporting on funding and this detracting from service provision; lack of continuity, longevity and sustainability. Example given of proactively planning how to use opportunities like yearly slippage monies to meet identified needs of the organisation / group.

Civic Society ‘Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations’ Workshop: Priorities

**Education**

* Section 75 should be extended to schools.
* De-politicise the education system.
* Educate society to reduce prejudice and bias.
* Inclusive, all ability education strategy is required.

Equality and Good Relations

* Parents need to be made aware of their right to equality of services and opportunity and have their children able to access these.
* Inclusion of young people in public appointments and policy decisions.
* Need for much more positive portrayal of young people.
* Research impact on enjoyment of equality of opportunity and good relations by young people as a result of loss of services and provision.
* More creative thinking required on interventions to support equality and good relations.
* Need for ongoing work with the voluntary and community sector regarding equality and good relations as the CSCA is an unknown quantity.
* Data should be available on all section 75 groups about all aspects of their lives.
* Pro-active mechanism of consultation with young people.

Legacy of the Conflict

* Recognise the impact of the legacy of the conflict on the lives of children and young people on their rights to education, family, housing and play and address these impacts.
* Need to remove politics from health and education to make it work.

Government and the Children and young person’s strategy

* Support infrastructure that works with and for children and young people.
* Need for Children and young person’s strategy to intersect with other Government policies and strategies.
* Sharing of good practice necessary.
* Long-term multi-year funding available or at least long term thinking – too many short programmes. We need new ideas.
* More funding to support quality advocacy organisations.

Feedback from NICCY Youth Panel Workshop

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations’ Workshop: Summary of Discussion

**Education**

* Shouldn’t have to do religion in school if they don’t want to.
* Difficult to find out about R.E, History, etc when you are out of school or when you don’t go to a school that teaches about other religions, especially in Catholic schools.
* Children should have equal opportunity to study in their own or no religion.
* People should be able to give their personal experience on difficult issues not what the text book or syllabus dictates. Particular examples given from the Jewish. tradition that were not taught accurately in a school. The young people felt they were not listened to when they tried to raise it with the teacher. Teacher said if it’s in the text book it must be right.
* Lot of discussion on choice or lack of choice in picking subjects for GCSE’s.
* Schools need to change how they view each other. Grammar school pupils are treated as snobs as if they are looking down on colleges and they aren’t.
* Segregated education leads to the indoctrination of segregated mindsets from primary school.
* Schools and society should be tolerant of young people who identify as non-binary gender.

**Equality and Good Relations**

* Children and young people shouldn’t be discriminated against for any reason.
* A few examples were given of cross community and cross cultural activities, mostly led by schools. These were particularly good when not about religion, about sport or other activities and mixed group.
* Young people highlighted feeling vulnerable because they are gay or Christian.
* Christians being targeted and laughed at even if you are not pushing it down people’s throats its very upsetting – tarred with the intolerance brush.
* LGBT young people are still bullied in schools, by pupils and teachers.
* Bullying is still rife on a range of grounds – nothing is really done about it.
* There needs to be many more opportunities for young people to mix religions.
* Young people shouldn’t be defined by their religion.

**Legacy of the Conflict**

* Young people are still targeted in their communities because of their religion.
* Interface areas are still not safe for young people.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations’ Workshop: Priorities

**Education**

* More choice for young people - not forced.
* Teach RE in an unbiased way.
* Fully integrated education system.
* Schools need to understand young people better and that they don’t care about religion or difference.
* More integrated schools.
* Young people should be able to choose what they want to do in religion and school more generally.
* If someone is out of school they should be helped so they can be up to everyone else’s academic standards.
* Change uniform policies to make uniforms unisex.
* RE not compulsory.
* Invest in underprivileged schools.
* Integrated education.
* More activities to mix religions and build relationships with other people from other religions.
* Being able to decide on uniform – trousers / skirts.
* More acceptance of LGBT.
* Change how schools view each other.

**Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations**

* More cross-community opportunities.
* Making children and young people more aware of activities for equality and good relations.
* Remove ‘peace walls’.
* Stop discrimination.
* Religion shouldn’t matter.
* More opportunities to bring Protestants and Catholics together.
* More activities to mix religions and build relationships with other people from other religions.
* A better equality for young people to show that they accept diversity.
* Disable the label.
* More LGBT acceptance.
* More transgender toilets and facilities.
* LGBT children and young people should be more welcome in schools and better facilities e.g. LGBT toilets.
* LGBT children and young people should be more welcome in clubs.
* Let people choose their preferred gender.
* Youth clubs not defined by learning about the other / different religion.
* LGBT acceptance.
* More acceptance of LGBT.

NICCY Youth Panel ‘Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations’ Workshop: Additional Notes

* Forced RE.
* Cross community projects.
* Our past needs to be taught to everyone from a non biased point of view.
* RE should be taught about different religions especially at GCSE.
* Apart from Catholic school who should be able to have their RE should NOT be taught from a Christian point of view.
* Knocking down of ALL peace walls.
* More peace projects for different religions and disabilities.
* Choice for young people – not forced.
* OCN in good relations through TBUC.
* More funding required to complete activities.
* EDI (Equity, diversity, interdependence).
* Section 75.
* Promote wellbeing of children.
* We can’t do subject – revision techniques are hard.
* Applies to ALL (social, health, transport etc).
* Advice on engaging children and young people in developing the children and young people’s strategy.
* Social media – polls, ads.
* Youtube – ad.
* Get into schools.
* City hall – big screen.
* Youth panel hits the streets (put conversations on TV).
* Promote through the News and competitions.
* Awareness raising through CBBIES/cartoons, workshops.
* Government needs youth advisors.
* Set targets every few years and monitor.
* Travel expenses.

Children and Young Person’s Strategy – Survey Responses

People who were unable to attend the Civic Society workshops were invited to instead provide feedback on the development of the strategy through an online survey. There were six responses, the majority of respondents made comments which related to three or more of the outcome areas. A summary of the responses from the survey are outlined below and an anonymised copy of each survey response is available at Appendix 3.

* Lack of awareness of museums as a shared space and one which addresses social exclusion, deemed a particular issue for socially disadvantaged children who may not be part of community groups or have access to wider cultural opportunities.
* The need for greater investment in promoting and supporting new mothers to breast feed. This should include antenatal education, and support from hospital to home and community.
* There is a need for more child friendly public places which are co-designed with children and young people.
* The need for children and young people to be valued as individual rights holders. Children identified as being at particular risk of rights not being realised include children with disabilities, young carers and children living in poverty.
* Need for age appropriate counselling and therapeutic support to promote positive mental health. A particular concern was that there is no universally accessible counselling for primary school children.
* The need for greater involvement of school age children in shaping educational policy, to be protected from bullying in schools, including racial bullying and for children with SEN and AEN to be supported. The need for greater respect for cultural diversity which includes support for linguistic minorities. These concerns were deemed to be particular issues for newcomer and BME groups.
1. The ‘additional notes’ in this section are integrated with the Youth Panel’s priorities, but are italicised to allow differentiation between the two. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Additional notes’ are italicised and included after the ‘priorities’ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)