

# ACCESS TO INFORMATION & PARTICIPATION

- ⊕ Children have the right to have a say in decisions that affect them and to influence decisions taken on their behalf.
- ⊕ This right doesn't stop during a crisis such as the COVID 19 pandemic. Children and young people still need access to reliable information, space to share their opinions and to be listened to by those in power.
- ⊕ As schools & youth clubs shut down, the usual ways for children and young people to participate disappeared too.
- ⊕ Governments in other Countries held press conferences for children & young people to ask questions and share their ideas. This was not the case in Northern Ireland.
- ⊕ Government provided lots of sources of information - however, much more could have been done to make it more accessible & clearer for children and young people to understand.

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*"I just found the whole Covid thing really stressful in a way because they didn't explain it properly and I was just confused all the time. And they keep changing the rules and it's just hard to keep up with the rules and stuff."*

*(Young Person supported by MENCAP)*

## WHAT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

- ⊕ Children and young people understand that in emergencies quick decisions have to be made. However, structures need to be place so children & young people can be consulted quickly and effectively including during any future public emergency.
- ⊕ Executive Ministers & the Assembly should engage and communicate directly with young people on matters that impact on their lives.
- ⊕ Government policies should be developed to engage participation forums such as schools, youth organisations and the new NI Youth Assembly to ensure quick feedback from children and young people especially in any future emergency.
- ⊕ Relevant information must be easily accessible to children and young people, targeted at particular ages & abilities & should be done at the same time as wider public messaging.

