

Northern Ireland Update: ROCK meeting, Edinburgh, 17 October 2012 Save the Children, NI

Child Rights Legislation – Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) has initiated a Children's Rights Implementation Group (CRIG) to act 'as an advisory group to support the Commissioner to promote the implementation of children's rights through the use of her independent legislative powers'. Membership is cross-sectoral and includes voluntary, community, academic, and statutory representatives. The CRIG has met three times since April 2012; the next meeting is 26 October 2012.

NICCY has developed a draft proposal for NI level legislation to enhance child rights protections, which she has shared with the Children's Rights Implementation Group and the Junior Ministers, who are responsible for children. Members of the CRIG have discussed the proposals and offered suggestions for development. Among others, Save the Children and the Children's Law Centre have recommended strengthening the initial proposals developed by NICCY.

A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland remains a priority, as a commitment of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement 1998. Robust discussions are taking place regarding how to strengthen child rights protections without weakening the Bill of Rights campaign.

With progress in child rights legislation in Wales and Scotland, and the pending constitutional referendum in the Republic of Ireland, it may be useful to discuss opportunities for NICCY and the children's sector in Northern Ireland to learn from experiences elsewhere.