

YOUR
SAY



Responses from Politicians to additional Questions at Your Say Child Rights Event

The Q&A had a limited number of questions that could be answered. In line with a Child Rights based approach we made a commitment to answer the questions that could not be asked after the event. We hope this helps everyone to feel heard. Sorry it took longer than expected. We met with Politicians from each political party to get the responses. Where questions are similar, they are grouped and answered together.

Youth Service Funding Cuts

- 1. What are you doing about the Youth Service Funding – Long Tower Youth Club**
- 2. What are they doing about the funding for youth?**
- 3. Why did they cut youth funding?**

Council has taken a strong stance against all cuts. Most Youth Services are funded through the Department for Education with a smaller amount funded by the Department for Communities. All departments were impacted by the block grant received from Westminster. Stormont had to find over £800 million in savings across all departments.

Council has lobbied the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Councillors have taken part in a variety of protests across the district to strengthen the collective voice. See article on Councils Health and Community Committee where Councillors passed a motion to lobby on behalf of the youth sector/ CYP to the Education Authority (EA). <https://www.derrydaily.net/2022/12/12/derry-councillors-furious-over-proposed-youth-service-funding-cuts/>

Lobbying by community activists across NI, supported by the Mayor of Derry and Strabane and political representatives resulted in the reversal of some cuts to youth and early years' services. However, not all services were protected, and this has negatively impacted children, young people, and the workers.

See article on reversal of funding cuts following the Community Day of Action.

<https://www.derrynow.com/news/home/1184865/cuts-reversed-to-youth-and-early-years-programmes-including-the-pathway-fund-sure-start-bright-start-and-toybox.html>

Democracy / Voting

- 1. Young people are represented by adults, rather than young people themselves!**
- 2. You must be 18 to vote if young people should have a voice in politics shouldn't the age to vote lower, we are old enough to work at 15/16 why not vote?**

Council has been a long-term supporter for the Votes at 16 Campaign. This long-term support has been re-affirmed at a Council Meeting held on 27 September 2023. Councillors supported a motion to gain support from all Councils in Northern Ireland and jointly write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, asking him to amend the legislation to allow the voting age in NI to be reduced to 16.

The commitment has also been added to the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities Action Plan. The NI Youth Forum have led on the Votes at 16 campaigns in Northern Ireland since 2017.

Young People in Derry/ Strabane will be supported in 2024 to be part of the NI wide campaign to create change. Politicians have agreed to continue to support this.

Political Education

1. **Why isn't there more education on politics? I feel as though a lot of young people are very uneducated on this and will grow up to only see if a party is Catholic or Protestant what is your party doing for young people?**

Education on politics is important. Council organises an annual Local Democracy Week programme and events like 'Let's Talk' which involve local politicians meeting directly with young people. More of these type of activities should be run in future to raise more awareness. All political parties take part in these activities in Derry and Strabane and will continue to do this to help raise awareness. Read the 'Let's Talk' news article to find out more - <https://www.derrynow.com/news/local-news/1361390/derry-students-given-chance-to-challenge-councillors-at-lets-talk-event.html>

Suicide & Mental Health Services

1. **What is the point of having a conference on human rights if children are considering suicide?**
2. **Why is there such a long waiting list for things as councillors and CAMHS (3 years)?**
3. **Why is outside Councillors expensive and why won't the government pay or support these (and support the councillors)?**

If you or a friend is feeling suicidal and needs urgent support. Call the number below.

HOPELINE247
0800 068 41 41

If you or a friend want to find out more/ understand suicidal feelings but are not in immediate danger, please visit the Young Minds Website.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/suicidal-feelings/>

The Youth Wellness Web sets out all things wellbeing for people your age in Northern Ireland.

<https://cypsp.hscni.net/youth-wellness-web/>

It is important to continue to promote Human Rights and Child Rights as this includes things like children and young people being entitled to the best health care possible (Article 24 UNCRC). Child Rights awareness raising with professionals and children helps everyone understand Government Responsibilities to ensure that all children realise their rights. This includes the right to access Mental Health support.

Mental Health is funded through the Department for Health. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Northern Ireland has been historically underfunded. The previous Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) called for an increase in funding to deal with the extensive pressures and waiting lists experienced by children trying to access CAMHS services. The Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland (Professor Siobhan O'Neill) will take responsibility for the 'Still Waiting' mental health action plan. Read an update on the NICCY Website - [Young People Waiting Longer as Mental Health Services Struggle - Niccy](#)

Non-discrimination

1. Why is our dance music barred in Ebrington Square in this day and age? – Enagh Youth Forum

Council agrees that no exclusions should be allowed to any type of music in Ebrington Square. Council lobbied and has now taken on the responsibility for the management of events there. The land is owned and was previously managed by The Executive Office (TEO) when the previous concerts were cancelled. Up to five outdoor events in the square have been approved by Councillors. Council is managing an open process for event organisers to apply to deliver the events, with no exclusions to the type of music. Read an update on BBC News [Derry's Ebrington Square concert plan approved by councillors - BBC News](#)

Disability

- 1. I didn't manage to ask was, what's being done in relation to disabled children in school, making the school itself accessible? and as well as reducing bullying from other kids, and the disregard for a child's needs that make schools a hostile environment for disabled kids?**
- 2. Kids with special needs are not getting the support they need.**

Council does a lot of work to ensure Access and Inclusion in Council events, activities, and buildings which it has responsibility for running. Unfortunately, Council does not control the budget for schools however, if Councillors have a better understanding of the issues, they can help lobby on behalf of anyone experiencing difficulties. You can contact your local Councillor using the contact details on Councils website <http://meetings.derrycityandstrabanedistrict.com/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

The Education Authority is responsible for supporting disabled children in school. This includes any adaptations or reasonable adjustments, so everyone has equal access.

Other options if you feel your rights have not been respected.

- The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland offer advice and support for anyone who feel they have been discriminated against due to a disability. This includes school settings - [ECNI - Disability rights in education \(equalityni.org\)](#)
- NICCY – Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People offer support and guidance <https://www.niccy.org/>
- Childrens Law Centre also offers an online chatbot to answer questions about your rights - [Ask an Expert – Children's Law Centre \(childrenslawcentre.org.uk\)](#)

Sectarianism

It was mentioned that when Stormont comes back, sectarianism will be tackled. How?

Sectarianism is a major issue that has never been tackled effectively. It is down to everyone to work together to educate people, encourage more understanding of diversity and create the social circumstances for people to change.

At a Council level, £8 million in PEACE PLUS funding from SEUPB (Special EU Programmes Body) will be allocated to 58 projects across 3 themes. Find out more and see the easy read action plan online- <https://www.derrystrabane.com/community/peace-plus/co-designed-action-plan>