

youth@clc

APRIL 05

- 1 A big hello to Deborah McKenna, CLC's new Youth Support and Development Worker. Deborah spent April getting to know youth@clc members, staff of the Children's Law Centre and getting out into the community to introduce herself.
- 1 Congratulations, youth@clc was nominated for a 'Heart of the People' Award for the work they did on the Shout Out Soon report and received a Leadership Award certificate for their commitment and dedication in community development and vision for a brighter Belfast.



MAY 05

- 1 Deborah and Jenna represented youth@clc at the Electoral Commission's Post Election seminar that reported on local elections, detailed the administration of elections in May 2005, gave political party perspectives and reflected on the Westminster and local elections
- 1 Claire Bradley, who has been involved with youth@clc for many years has taken on more responsibility within the group and has become the Children's Rights Voluntary Worker with youth@clc. Her main role and task is to deliver training, supporting individual members of youth@clc as well as the group as a whole. Claire has also been a great source of support for the Youth Support and Development Worker and as a previous group member she is a positive role model for individuals in the group.

1 Recruitment for youth@clc members began with Deborah meeting with a wide range of youth groups and leaders from various areas of Belfast. youth@clc also suggested an information evening be planned to attract new members.

1 Deborah headed off to Derry to take part in media training with the Big Lottery Fund. The training was arranged to give/improve youth workers skills in representing themselves, the young people they work with and for and their organisations in the media.

JUNE 05

Claire, Jenna and Deborah attended a workshop with the Community Foundation to discuss 'Women in conflict'. The Community Foundation was hosting a group of women from Israel who discussed the conflict situation they were facing. Also present were many women from across Northern Ireland representing various organisations, discussing women's role in conflict within Northern Ireland.

- 1 The third Road to Rights Residential took place in Belfast's Stranmillis College. This residential covered a range of human rights issues and the participants learned about the ECHR and the Human Rights Act 1998. The Children's Law Centre's, Tara Caul, visited the group to talk about the Human Rights Act 1998 in Northern Ireland and what it meant. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the discussion and activities on this residential and it prepared them for further rights training in coming months.



- 1 youth@clc hosted an information evening to attract new members to the group. We had a formal information session and a games session led by youth@clc members focusing on the issues affecting young people and their rights.

- 1 youth@clc headed off to Belfast's City Hall to meet with Chris Quinn and the Belfast Youth Forum Working Group to consult on the running of the BCC's Youth Forum. Discussion focused on the age of group members, how many representatives the forum should consist of, areas representatives should hail from etc. It was an evening of group work. Graffiti walls were used for all young people present to have their say on what they wanted 'their Youth Forum' to be.

AUGUST 05

- 1 youth@clc took part in a training and consultation session with the Children's Law Centre's Diane Hammond on the issue of Family Law. Diane and youth@clc looked at the issues faced by young people who experience family proceedings. Diane asked youth@clc to take part in this session to inform a young person's leaflet on these issues. youth@clc members who attended this session felt that the session was very informative and said they got a lot out of it.



- 1 **Road to Rights residential – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** The young people in the Road to Rights group never rest. Off we went to learn about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child with lots of fun activities thrown in. We also went to see the Gay Pride Parade in Belfast, which was the basis of some discussion later that afternoon when we talked about discrimination and equality.

- 1 youth@clc members went to 2 consultation days on the Review of Public Administration organised by the RPA in partnership with the Northern Ireland Youth Forum. Chris, who represented youth@clc on both days enjoyed the consultation exercises and activities and felt he made valuable contributions to the review.

- 1 Natalie Strain, CLC's Policy Officer, and Grainne Kelly from Save the Children, met with youth@clc to discuss the Anti Poverty Strategy. youth@clc commented on the government's proposals to reduce poverty in Northern Ireland. This also doubled as a training session with the group members learning a lot about child poverty in Northern Ireland.

- 1 youth@clc headed off to the Belfast Activity Centre for a day of team building activities to motivate group members and build relationships between all members, new and old. It was a fun day and we got good weather.

- 1 Claire Bradley and Deborah attended the Talking Citizenship 2 'Walking the Talk' conference. 'Participation' was the focus and participants were encouraged to present and discuss models of participation and explore best practice in relation to participation. Claire and Deborah co-facilitated a session on youth@clc as an advisory panel and advocacy group on children's rights and highlighted the variety of exercises and projects that youth@clc has been involved in that demonstrate participation.

- 1 The Fermanagh Shadow Youth Council participated in a day long training workshop with Deborah and Sara Boyce, CLC's Human Rights Advisor, on the UNCRC. A lot was covered in the day and we rounded off with a role play showing how the UN Committee on the Rights on the Child works in theory. The young people who participated were able to see the strengths and weaknesses of the Convention and the Committee's proceedings and had some interesting suggestions on how to improve things.



SEPTEMBER 05

- 1 Road to Rights group hit the road again in search of knowledge and understanding of local legislation and to discuss the barriers there are to children's right in Northern Ireland and beyond.

- 1 Employment regulations equality consultation - Natalie, once again, graced us with her presence to discuss employment law with youth@clc. Many of the group members were unaware of the laws relating to children and young people and employment and found the session informative. Natalie asked the group members what they felt about the law and if they could make changes, what would it be? youth@clc gladly obliged.



OCTOBER 05

- 1 Deborah, in a bid to recruit more young people for youth@clc began facilitating sessions to schools and youth organisations throughout Belfast.
- 1 youth@clc began preparing for their latest and greatest project 'UNCRC ... Building Blocks to Children's Rights'. The group met on several occasions to design a sculpture that reflects the state of children's rights in Northern Ireland today. youth@clc talked about how they would go about making the sculpture, where it should be displayed and how.



NOVEMBER 05

- 1 youth@clc began the practical work on the sculpture project, meeting every week, with the help of an artist, to make the sculpture piece. youth@clc, as well as working hard on the sculpture, had meetings to discuss the launch of the project and the format it would take. They also met with Sean McCrystal to talk about designing the invitation to the launch event.
- 1 Deborah continued to visit local schools and youth organisations.
- 1 Having completed the residential side of the Road to Rights programme, group members attended the Children's Law Centre to showcase the skills and knowledge they attained while on the programme. Each young person was given the opportunity to make a presentation on a children's rights issue they learnt about to their peers. These presentations were based on the work they had already done on the programme and counted as evidence for their OCN accreditation.



DECEMBER 05

- 1 UNCRC ... Building Blocks to Children's Rights was launched on the 16th December to mark the day that the UK government ratified (approved) the UNCRC. The sculpture was sited in the Waterfront Hall in Belfast. Its aim... to raise awareness of the UNCRC with the general public.

FEBRUARY 06

- 1 youth@clc, in collaboration with the Parents Advice Centre, made 'Are you REALLY Listening?' - a powerful DVD that highlights the experiences and feelings of children and young people whose parents divorce or separate. youth@clc worked extremely hard; doubling their efforts (and meetings) to come up with a script and film the DVD. The DVD itself was screened at a major conference 'Getting it right for children when parents are separating' in March 06 to major acclaim. The conference sought to influence policy makers to ensure the voice of the child is heard in Family Law proceedings.
- 1 Claire Bradley, the Children's Rights Voluntary Worker with youth@clc and Deborah were accepted onto the NIOCN Level 3 in Global Youth Work. Both Claire and Deborah wanted to gain a better awareness of the issues to inform youth@clc and other young people about development issues.

MARCH 06

- 1 youth@clc hosted a young person's event in co-operation with Trocaire as part of their Lenten campaign. The event focused on Nicaragua. Every Child has the Right to a Childhood. Two young Nicaraguans, who had been child workers, recounted their efforts to secure basic rights and entitlements. The event was extremely interesting and drew a further 45 young people to the event in the Children's Law Centre at which, in addition to informing the young people of the issues facing children in Nicaragua gained support for the Nicaragua project. youth@clc, as well as hosting the event and making a presentation to the overall group, gained a wealth of information and were able to make the link from local to global drawing on similarities in both countries.



- 1 Three members of youth@clc represented Northern Ireland at the launch of the UK's reporting process to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. One group member was given the opportunity to make a speech on their experiences of working to promote the UNCRC and children's rights in Northern Ireland. The young people gained a great deal from their attendance. The opportunities to 'have their say' in the workshops increased their confidence and gave them an insight into issues affecting young people across the UK. For youth@clc as a group this was a great opportunity for them to participate in the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child reporting process for the UK and also to advocate on behalf of the children and young people in Northern Ireland.

INTO THE FUTURE

- youth@clc and Young Voices will be working on a DVD project as part of a workshop for the forthcoming XVII World Congress of the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates to be held in Belfast in August 2006.
- Further children's rights sessions are scheduled for the Northern Health and Social Services Board area of Northern Ireland
- youth@clc are designing a new recruitment leaflet for youth@clc
- youth@clc will continue consulting on issues that affect children and young people to inform CLC's policy and legislative responses
- youth@clc wish to develop a newsletter targeted at children and young people who are members of CLC



Do you know your rights about ...

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement which over 190 countries throughout the world have signed. When a government signs the Convention, they are making a 'promise' to children and young people up to the age of 18yrs. This promise means that they should make sure that all the rights that are in the Convention are actually put in place.

Each part of the Convention is called an article. There are 54 articles in the Convention and here is what they say:

Articles 1- 42

- 1 The Convention covers all children and young people up to the age of 18.
- 2 The Convention applies to all children whoever you are and whoever your parents are. This means you must be treated equally no matter what colour or religion you are, what language you speak, whether you are male or female, have a disability or how rich or poor you are. The government has to make sure

that every child is treated the same.

- 3 When people like teachers, social workers or the police are making decisions about you, they should always do what is best for you.
- 4 If the government has to it should change its laws to keep its promise.
- 5 The government must understand that your parents and family are important people in your life. The government must also see that generally as you get older you are more able to make up your own mind.
- 6 Every child has a right to life and to opportunities which will help you develop.
- 7 You have the right to have a name and to have a record of this kept safely. You also have a right to be a member of a country. This is known as your nationality.
- 8 You have a right to keep your nationality and your name.
- 9 You should be able to live with your parents. You should not be separated from them unless it is for your own good. If you do not live with both your parents you have a right to keep in contact with them as long as it is safe to do so.

10 If, for some reason, you or your parents are living in different countries, you have the right to leave or go to any country so that you can live together.

- 11 You should not be kidnapped. If you are, your government should do all that it can to get you back.
- 12 You have a right to have a say and be listened to. If a decision is being made that will affect you, then you have a right to say what you think and be taken seriously by adults.

13 You have the right to say what you think or feel and you can do this in many ways, through speaking, writing, art, dress or style. It is important that what you say and do does not take away the rights of others. You also have the right to look for and get information on things that you are interested in.

14 You have a right to choose your own religion and have your own beliefs and opinions. Your parents can guide you in this but as you get older your ability to do this for yourself must be respected.

15 You have the right to meet and make friends with others and to join clubs or organisations. You have also the right to take part in meetings, peaceful marches or demonstrations so long as this does not affect other people's rights.

16 You have the right to a private life, e.g. private letters and phone-calls. This is particularly important for young people living in boarding schools, residential homes, juvenile justice centres or hospitals where having this type of privacy is sometimes difficult.

17 You have the right to get information from lots of different places. This information should be given in a way that you can understand. Information that may be harmful to you should not be easy to get.

18 Parents have the main responsibility to look after and care for you. The government must help them do this.

19 You have the right to be protected from all harm including physical and mental abuse. Even your parents have no right to hurt you. If you are being harmed the government must do something about it.

20 If you cannot live with your family the government must give you somewhere else to live, this is sometimes called being in care. When they are doing this they must think about your religious and cultural needs.

21 If you are being adopted this must be arranged in a way that is best for you.

22 If you have to leave your country because it is not safe for you to live there (that is if you are a refugee), the government of the country you move to must give you protection and help.

23 If you have a disability you have the right to enjoy the same life as other children and young people. The government must provide extra care and education to enable you to be as independent as possible.

24 You have the right to the best type of health care, such as medicine, doctors, and hospitals. Health education is an important part of this and should be part of school work.

25 If you are in care the government must make sure that they regularly check that this is still the best choice for you.

26 You have the right to gain from the government's social security system.

27 You are entitled to a good standard of living, this means a warm place to live, food and clothes. The government must support your parents to provide this for you.

28. You have the right to education which should be free at primary

school. When rules and regulations of your school are being made up and put in place, it must be done in a way that treats you with respect.

29 The school you go to must give you chances to develop all of your personality, skills and talents, it is not just about exams and tests. Through doing this it should prepare you for life when you leave school.

30 People from different cultures should be able to celebrate their culture and be able to practice their own religion and language.

31 You have the right to play and have fun.

32 If you are working this should be safe and follow government guidelines, such as how many hours you should work. You should be properly paid for your work. This work should not interfere with your education.

33 You have the right to be protected from dangerous drugs and from being involved in making or selling these drugs.

34 The government must protect you from sexual abuse. No-one is allowed to do anything to your body that you do not want them to do, eg. to touch you or to take

pictures of you.

35 The government must protect you from being kidnapped or sold.

36 You have the right not to be taken advantage of in any way that is not already mentioned in articles 32- 35, for example being bullied by members of your community.

37 If you come into contact with the law you have the right to be treated fairly and in a way that takes account of your age. If you have broken the law you should only go to prison as a last resort and you should not be put in prison with adults. If you do go to prison you should be allowed to have regular contact with your family.

38 If you are under 15 you should not be asked or forced to join an army. If there is fighting in your country you must be protected and you should not be asked to take part in any armed fighting.

39 If because of war you have been hurt or badly treated in any way, you have the right to receive proper treatment that helps you get better.

40 If you have been accused of doing a crime you have the right

to defend yourself with legal help. The court and the police should make sure that you understand what is happening at all times. They should only hold you in a police station as a last resort and for as short a time as possible.

41 The Convention isn't perfect and it is the very least of what you should get. If a law exists in your country that is better than the Convention then this is what the government should work by.

42 All adults and young people should know about the Convention and have it explained to them and how it applies to the lives of children and young people.

43-54 There are 11 other articles which tell the government and adults what they have to do to put this Convention into place to make your life better.

If you have any questions about the Convention or would like more information or advice about any of the articles, please contact us here at the Children's Law Centre and we will do our best to help you.