

Northern Ireland Official Praises Media Initiative for Children

Excerpts from a speech given by Barney McNeany, Chief Operating Officer, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, to launch the Media Initiatives for Children - Respecting Difference on April 26, 2005.

Early in 2004, whilst I was still working at the Equality Commission I was preparing for my move to NICCY. Nigel came in to my office and asked me to come and meet Siobhan and colleagues from NIPPA and the Peace Initiatives Institute. They showed me the cartoons and the materials for the Respecting Difference Campaign and I must admit that I was and remain an immediate fan.

The Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, as the name suggests, is about promoting and safeguarding children's rights. Our mission, which is derived from the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 is to:

Safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people by listening to them and working with them to challenge and change the world in which they live.

Education is the most important area for action in the field of community relations generally and, in particular, a means of combating the underlying causes of hate crime.

Thankfully we are not alone in this very important work. Organizations such as NIPPA and the Peace Initiatives Institute (Pii) are working hard to protect and promote the rights of children, provide them with high quality services and involve them in decisions that affect their lives.

You will see that many of these priorities overlap with the launch this morning of this (Media Initiative For Children). It will help children and young people understand their rights, it will help children and young people who are being bullied or who are suffering bullying because of their disability or special educational needs, and it will help children and young people to be better protected and safeguarded."

The impact Jenny, Jim, Kim and Tom, the characters in this fabulous resource, will have by prompting children to ask their parents questions about race, disability and discrimination is potentially tremendous and we in NICCY are pleased to see the pilot is producing positive outcomes. You will continue to have our support for this excellent work.