YOUTH MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

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THE NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FORUM (NIYF)

works with young people to find out about the things that they care about. We have listened to young people and written this manifesto to ask people in power to make changes and involve young people in the way things are decided.

A manifesto is a document made up of a collection of ideas to motivate, inspire and encourage people to create change.

Covid-19 has made things worse for lots of young people and the government needs to listen and make things better.

For our manifesto to work

WE NEED BIG CHANGES

to help improve the lives of young people.
Some of these are big government changes including:

A MINISTER FOR YOUTH

In Government there are people called Ministers. A Minister in the Northern Ireland Government is someone who has a special role and responsibilities dealing with a certain area of government.

There should be a politician in government who is responsible for young people's issues and rights. The Minister for Youth should be a main part of the NI Government and should work with the Commissioner for Children and Young People and speak directly to children and young people.

We are asking that a Minister for Youth role is created.

AN ALL-PARTY WORKING GROUP (INCLUDING DEPARTMENTAL YOUTH CHAMPIONS) FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

An all Party Working Group is a group where people in power come together to talk about issues that matter to everyone (including young people). Other people, such as youth workers, can speak to and present information to them when they meet.

Departmental Youth Champions help people in power make decisions on young people's issues.

There should be a committee in Government where politicians and young people work together on issues impacting young people. This group should have links to the Minister for Youth.

We are asking for an All Party Working Group for Young People to be created in Stormont.

KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHTS

A right is something a person has that people think should not be taken away from them. This should be to protect them and make sure their needs are met. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a document with 42 rights that young people have.

Young people sometimes do not know about their rights so are often unfairly treated. Young people feel that rights education should be taught from a young age.

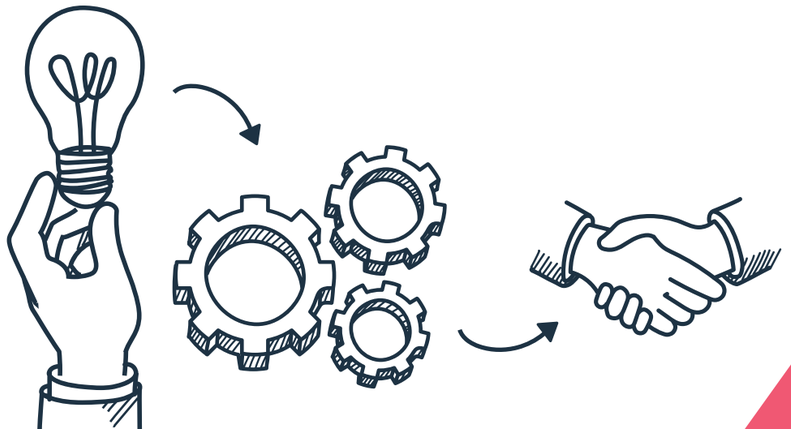
We are asking that young people are taught about their rights in school.

A BILL OF RIGHTS THAT PROTECTS YOUNG PEOPLE

A 'Bill of Rights' is something that protects you and your rights.

We need to make laws that make sure that young people are treated as they should be. The Government has done lots of work on 'A Bill of Rights' - this is a document that protects you and your rights. Not all of young people's rights are protected in law right now.

We are asking that young people's rights are included in law.



MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is about both feeling good and doing well. It helps us to notice how we are feeling and how to manage everyday living. When things don't go to plan, having good coping skills can help us. Mental health is not stuck at one level. With skills and practice it can be strengthened and built upon.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 6 - You have the right to life.
UNCRC Article 24 - You have the right to the best health care possible.

WE HAVE FOUND

That there is an ongoing issue around young people's mental health and Covid-19 has made this worse.

OUR ASKS

- People in power should look at how Covid-19 has impacted on young people's mental health and what they can do to support this
- More money should be given to youth work organisations to support young people's mental health.
- Young people's mental health services should be well-funded and designed by young people.
- Mental health awareness education training should be given to teachers and taught in schools as a compulsory part of the curriculum.
- People in power should look at how Covid-19 has impacted young people's mental health and what they can do to support this.
- Challenge the culture of silence and negative stigma about mental health and develop resources to promote more positive language, such as a mental health dictionary.

Children and young people don't have as much power as adults - for example young people can't vote until they turn 18. It is important for young people to have a say on issues that affect their lives. Young people should have a space to be heard, to be listened to and their opinions and views should change things for the better.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 12 - You have the right to have a say.

WE HAVE FOUND

That young people want to have a relationship with people in power so that they can be heard and create change.

OUR ASKS

- Make it a law that there is a Youth Assembly.
- Allow everyone to vote from 16 years old.
- Make sure people in power know why it's important to listen to young people.
- A Youth Council in every school funded by the Department for Education and that is linked to the school Board of Governors.
- A Youth Forum in every area that is funded by and works with the local council.

EDUCATION

Your education is important for you to learn, develop your personality and talents, gain new skills, make friends and try new things. Education is different for everybody, and we must work together to make sure that it is a positive experience for everyone.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 28 - You have the right to an education.

UNCRC Article 29 - Your education should help you to develop as a person and understand your rights.

WE HAVE FOUND

That young people want to have a say and have a choice about what they learn in school and from the curriculum. Young people at times feel stressed because of exams and school pressures. We believe they need better support in school to deal with this.

OUR ASKS

- Review how the Education Authority does its work.
- Give young people more opportunities to have a say how schools and the education system should be run.
- Give young people more choices in education including the type of school such as integrated or Irish medium education as well as the subjects that they want to study.
- Give schools more money including specific funding for Special Educational Needs.
- Youth led review of how young people transfer from primary to secondary school.
- A new youth work policy and funding for it
- 'Skills for life' to be taught in all schools, to include:
  - » Mental health.
  - » Compulsory Relationship and Sex Education in schools that includes all young people's needs and experiences.
  - » Careers advice.
  - » Knowledge of Rights.
  - » Money Management.
  - » Homelessness prevention.

HOUSING

Everyone has the right to have a home. Covid-19 resulted in a lot more young people becoming homeless. People who are homeless don't always sleep on the street. The problem includes people living in hostels or staying in their friend's house. More people need to work together to end homelessness. Things like food and heating are getting more and more expensive and young people need more support to avoid homelessness.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 27 - You have the right to develop in the best possible way. This means you should have food, clothes and safe place to live.

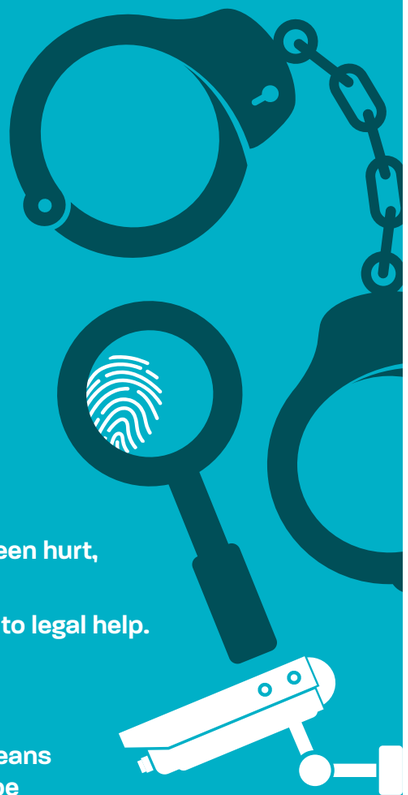
WE HAVE FOUND

That young people need good quality housing and support that meets their needs. This includes access to the right support and information. Government departments need to work together to tackle homelessness.

OUR ASKS

- Make a law that helps us to prevent homelessness.
- Invest in youth specific accommodation and services.
- End the stigma of homelessness.
- Make sure government departments work together on housing and homelessness issues.
- Employ more young people who have experienced homelessness to help others who are at risk of homelessness.
- Give power to the NI Housing Executive to build good quality affordable houses in areas where young people want to live.
- Give more rights to young people who are renting their home.
- More support for young people when they get a new home.

POLICING, JUSTICE & SAFETY



The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) are responsible for keeping you safe, making sure everybody follows the law and stopping crime. Everyone deserves justice and should feel safe in every aspect of their life.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 39 - You have the right to help if you have been hurt, neglected, or badly treated.

UNCRC Article 40 - If you break the law, you have the right to legal help.

WE HAVE FOUND

That NI is a society which is not long out of conflict; this means there are still lasting issues to work on. Relationships can be tense within communities. Young people feel that they are often stopped and searched by the PSNI for no reason.

OUR ASKS

- The Victim of Crime Commissioner should have a team who work with and support young people who need it.
- It should be against the law to treat young people unfairly because of their age.
- More support for young people when they are dealing with the police.
- There should not be stereotyping of children and young people by the PSNI and they should be trained in how to work with young people.
- Young people should be able to have a voice on policing.
- Bite guards, mosquito devices and stop & searches of children and young people should be illegal.

POVERTY

Poverty means not having enough money for basic needs such as food, drinking water, shelter or toiletries. It means waking up every day worrying about money and how you will survive.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 26 - Governments should provide money or other support to help children from poor families.

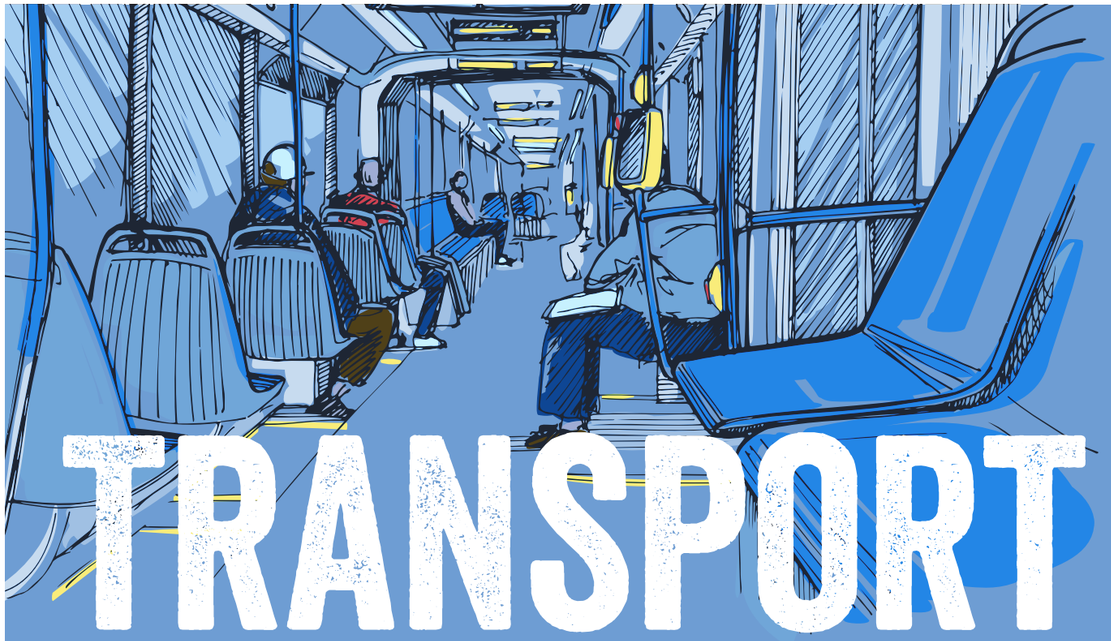
UNCRC Article 27 - You have the right to develop in the best possible way. This means you should have food, clothes and a place to live.

WE HAVE FOUND

That more young people are finding themselves in difficult situations and are struggling to meet the rising cost of living.

OUR ASKS

- More support for young people to understand the benefit system.
- Urgent government action to help with increasing costs of fuel, food, clothes and other bills
- Equal pay for equal work - everyone should be paid the same wage, no matter what age you are.
- Young people's jobs should have better protections and pay.
- Youth apprenticeships should have better support and lead to permanent jobs.
- More funding should be given to the youth work sector to support pathways to employment
- End student fees.
- Politicians in Stormont should have more power to spend money the way it needs to be spent.



TRANSPORT

Young people use public transport for many things - such as traveling to education, work and to see their friends. Transport is important and it should not stop young people enjoying their day. There are many ways to travel including: bus, trains, cycling and walking.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 15 - You have the right to meet others and join groups or organisations.

WE HAVE FOUND

That having no transport can sometimes stop young people doing what they want to do - especially if you live in a rural areaTransport can also be expensive for young people. Some young people have had negative experiences when using public transport and believe this should be improved.

OUR ASKS

- Transport workers and young people should work together to better understand each other.
- Public transport should be free for young people.
- Transport should be better in rural areas.
- The complaints processes should be easy to use for young people.
- More safe bike lanes across NI.
- Better train and bus routes across NI.

ENVIROMENT

There are lots of environmental issues like climate change, pollution and recycling. How we deal with these things will affect our planet forever.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 24 - You have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment and information to help you stay well.

WE HAVE FOUND

That young people are calling for the government to act on climate change. They want to see more affordable renewable energy in NI and that more work should be done to encourage people to use active travel.

OUR ASKS

- More renewable energy for our houses.
- Plant more trees and wild flowers on unused land.
- Teach young people about climate change.
- Include young people in decision making about climate change.

PEACE BUILDING

Our community is made up of people with different opinions. Peace building is about helping people to resolve their differences peacefully and preventing future violence.

OUR RIGHTS

UNCRC Article 14 - You have the right to practice your own culture, language and religion - or any you choose. Minority and indigenous groups need special protection of this right.

WE HAVE FOUND

That young people want an end to division in our society - in communities, housing, education and services. Young people don't want to be separated due to their religious beliefs and culture. People in power should work together to accept and celebrate diversity.

OUR ASKS

- More funding available for youth work based on celebrating diversity.
- Investment in safe spaces for talking about peace building, legacy and identity.
- Young people should be supported to speak directly to people in power about peace building.

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