

Partnership Directorate  
Northern Ireland Policing Board  
Waterside Tower  
31 Clarendon Road  
Clarendon Dock  
Belfast  
BT1 3BG

9 November 2018

**Re: Local Policing Review 2018**

As you will be aware it is the primary aim of the Commissioner to safeguard and promote the rights and best interests of children and young people in Northern Ireland under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NI) Order 2003.

Under Articles 7(2) and (3) of this legislation, NICCY has a mandate to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law, practice and services relating to the rights and best interests of children and young people by relevant authorities. Under Article 7(4), NICCY has a statutory duty to advise any relevant authority on matters concerning the rights or best interests of children and young persons. The Commissioner's remit as you will be aware, includes children and young people from birth up to 18 years, or 21 years, if the young person is disabled or in the care of social services. In carrying out her functions, the Commissioner's paramount consideration is the rights of the child or young person, having particular regard to their wishes and feelings. In exercising her functions, the Commissioner has regard to all relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

We are taking this opportunity to raise a number of issues relevant to the future planning of local policing which have in turn, been raised with us by stakeholders during our engagement with them specifically about paramilitary style assaults on children and young people and raised as well as in the course of the Commissioner's engagements with other stakeholders.

These include:

- Lack of confidence in policing - A robust action plan/strategy within local policing plans which seeks to build confidence within communities to provide them with assurances that local policing will indeed be policing with the community and for the community;
- Response times – During our engagement with community and voluntary sector organisations, we have been informed when police have been called, the response times have been too long, when responding, at times inappropriate and have only served to reduce confidence in local policing;
- Lack of visible policing - Another common theme in referrals to us is the lack of visible community officers e.g. when police are visible 'on the ground' crime levels in areas drop<sup>1</sup> and the converse occurs when police are not visible. This obviously impacts also on levels of confidence in policing;

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<sup>1</sup> Stated at NICCY meetings with local community organisations and political representatives following paramilitary style assaults (shootings) of 2 young people in west Belfast (2017) referencing the murder of Mr. McGreevy.

- Stop & Search - You will no doubt be aware of our views in relation to the use of 'Stop and Search' on children and young people. In particular our concerns relate to the statistics<sup>2</sup> which tend to show that the tactic is disproportionate<sup>3</sup>. The Commissioner has previously stated her particular concerns as:
  - The disproportionate number of Children and Young People who are stopped and searched;
  - Its effectiveness as a policing tool;
  - The detrimental impact it has on young people's confidence in policing; and
  - The lack of data tracing through to disposal or arrest and then to conviction.
- Body worn video cameras - We recently provided our views on the use of body worn video by Officers when they are engaging with children and young people. For clarity it is our firm view that body worn video cameras should always be used and turned on (as we have been told these are turned off at certain times) when Officers are interacting with children and young people;  
It is important that the role and function of body worn video is addressed in your future plans for local policing.
- Paramilitary style attacks<sup>4</sup> - Is one which has been raised with us on numerous occasions by various stakeholders including children and young people, community and voluntary sector organisations, locally elected representatives and other statutory agencies. Obviously the role of local police officers is crucial in the quest to eradicate this abuse of children within local communities. We would expect this to be reflected in any future local policing plan.  
  
As you will be aware action A5 of the NI Executive Action Plan on Tackling Paramilitarism<sup>5</sup> addresses 'policing with the community'  
  
*A5 - The Executive, the Policing Board and the PSNI should review the resourcing and operation of policing in communities to ensure that policing is visible and resourced to fully engage in those communities most vulnerable to criminal control.*
- Policing and Community Safety Partnerships<sup>6</sup> - Lack of confidence / frustration has been apparent in comments received by NICCY at recent meetings with community organisations. It is felt they are not as effective as they should/could be and also that they

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<sup>2</sup>The Detail found that in three years (2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16), 14,671 children (U18s) were stopped and searched. 780 were arrested, that is a rate of 5.3%<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> QUB UJ KESS Series '**Contextualising Stop and Search in Northern Ireland**' 09.05.18

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.niccy.org/about-us/our-current-work/statement-on-childrens-rights-in-northern-ireland/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/articles/executive-programme-tackling-paramilitary-activity-and-organised-crime>

<https://www.pcsp.org/content/what-do-pcsp-do> What do PCSPs do?

are not as representative of the local community they serve. NICCY e.g. has previously made clear that membership should include young people. The

A6 - In setting the strategic objectives of PCSPs, the Department of Justice and Policing Board should ensure that the partnerships focus on building community confidence in the rule of law and embedding a culture of lawfulness.

NICCY believes it is crucial that young people are engaged with appropriately in order to build their trust and confidence in policing; the approach local PSNI officers take to engagement and communication with children and young people has to be beyond reproach.

It is important to point out that while we have been given some negative feedback in relation to local policing, we have also had some very positive feedback in relation to local policing initiatives. For example, parents have told us that local policing teams are often very good when their vulnerable children are engaging in risk taking behaviours within and outside the home. Local Officers have built good relationships with young people and are 'on first name terms' which has done much to alleviate previously negative perceptions of the police.

We trust that this assists and confirm that we would be happy to engage with you further.

Yours Sincerely



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Mairead McCafferty PQH LLM  
Chief Executive  
OBO NICCY