

## **Participation Network supports MLA's to hear directly from young people on how services can be improved.**



**Junior Minister Gerry Kelly and Dawn Purvis MLA (Chair of All Party Group on Children and Young People) amongst other MLA's listened to young people as they presented their recommendations around the issues of positive mental health, road safety, alcohol, teenage pregnancy and anti bullying at the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings on Wednesday 30 June.**

The young people, from Foyle, Limavady, Omagh, Fermanagh and Strabane Youth Councils, had an opportunity to voice their concerns directly to MLAs and the Northern Ireland Assembly All Party Group on Children and Young People.

Some of the key recommendations by the young people included:

In relation to **mental health**:

1. There should be more accessible / better advertised counselling available for young people in the school system. The counselling offered should be readily available.
2. All schools should have a Mental Health Awareness Programme as part of their Personal & Social Education.
3. Counselling Services should be available in each town so young people do not have to travel to Belfast for help.

**Road safety**:

1. Improve safety for pedestrians. i.e. for students, make it compulsory to add reflectors onto school uniforms.
2. A limit should be placed on the number of passengers allowed to travel with restricted drivers or inexperienced drivers.
3. There should be more rigorous training to prepare new drivers for driving at night and on a dual carriageway.

**Teenage pregnancy**:

1. The Youth Service should compliment sex education in schools by providing relevant programmes which support young people with sexual health matters.
2. Government should take responsibility for educating young people by way of advertising through the media e.g. hard hitting campaigns on television; internet and the press.
3. Sexual health education at basic introductory level should be introduced into Primary Schools, at Primary Seven.



Welcoming the presentation, Dawn Purvis MLA and Chair of the All Party Group on Children and Young People said:

“This is an exciting and important initiative. These young people have taken on some critical societal issues and produced excellent recommendations on how they should be addressed.”

In his speech, Junior Minister Gerry Kelly suggested that young people should knock on the doors of MLA's / Councillors to ensure their voices are heard.





The young people had the opportunity to talk directly to some MLA's from their area as well as members of the All Party Group on Children and Young People.

The MLA's offered some helpful guidance on how young people can take their recommendations further which included:

- Find out if any of their recommendations are incorporated into government's current policy – some are.
- There is still time to get involved in the consultation on DOE's Road Safety Strategy is currently open for consultation.
- Consider who can action each proposal.
- Minister for Health and Minister for Education both have responsibility for mental health.
- Ask to meet with the relevant Committees who are responsible for monitoring the work of Departments.
- Go to your local MLA and ask them to present a Q/A to the Assembly. Every MLA's address is their [firstname.surname@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:firstname.surname@niassembly.gov.uk)
- If the recommendations are not written in a policy, strategy or action plan it will not be achieved.
- Carryout research to find out what strategies exist e.g what is DE doing on bullying? How do we ensure consistency across Boards and Schools? Sexual education depends on the school.



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