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YOUTH

Getting the 'Right' Youth Justice

...engaging with the findings of
the review of the Youth Justice
System in Northern Ireland

Concluding Remarks
Koulla Yiasouma, Director, Include Youth

Conference
REPORT

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Koulla Yiasouma is Director of Include Youth. She trained as a social worker has worked as a probation and in NI Women's Aid as Regional Helpline Co-ordinator. Koulla has an MBA with the Open University.

She has been in her current post since 1998. Include Youth is an organisation that works to promote the rights of and best practice with young people in need or at risk. The organisation undertakes children's rights-based policy commentary and advocacy on a range of issues including criminal justice, social care, employment and the education of looked after and marginalised children and young people. Include Youth engages directly with young people through the Give and Take Scheme which works to enhance the employment and training skills of excluded young people aged 16 to 21 as well as Young Voices, a participation project for young people who have experienced the criminal justice system. She sits on a number of inter-agency groups seeking to improve outcomes for children, families and communities. She is a passionate advocate for the rights of all children especially those with the most challenging behaviours.

Koulla has been the Chairperson of Children in Northern Ireland and a member of the Probation Board for Northern Ireland. She is currently a member of the Patient and Client Council and was recently appointed to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership by the Health and Social Care Board.

“ Hi everybody. Thank you for staying. I am going to be very brief. And just to the tweeters at the back I have been looking at some of your tweets. It may be 4.35 before I start speaking but God love you because for the next 24 hours I'm not going to stop, so good luck to the rest of Include Youth.

Just very very quick, again I want to echo Phil's thanks for your attendance and your involvement today. I suppose I want just to give a wee apology for the fact that we haven't had the plenaries in the way we had planned them, and to reassure you that everything that has been said, either in the main room or in the workshops, it has been carefully recorded and will be in some form of proceedings which we'll put website and which we will E mail directly to each and every one of you. You know of we've got stenographers here, the IT guy, the sound guys at the back I think have been filming, no, you haven't, they have been taping and we had

careful notetakers in the workshops.

The other thing I want to say is that this is just the beginning of a conversation that we hope to be having with you over the next couple of months to inform both our own submission this review document, but also hopefully your own. So please feel free to come back to us during the next couple of, or preferably, well, the policy team during the next month. If you come up with ideas, if you have thought of things that you didn't get a chance to say today, or if there's something you think we should know and we will definitely be coming back to you with some of our thinking and our way forward. So I'm not going to say too much about the substance of what's been discussed because there's been so much. Except one thing, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is a vital issue and one that this organisation will not let go regardless of how difficult the battle will be. So those of you who are regular conference goers, and I still see a few of them in the room, you know that this is quite a different conference for us. So we'd be really really grateful if you would fill in, all of you, would fill in your evaluation and tell us what you think. We've tried something new, the vibe in the room and outside throughout the day has been incredibly positive, but then you would say that. But it would be really really good if you could be honest in your evaluation and let us know what it was like for you so that we can organise the next one in response to your views.

I just want to add my own thank you. I have said to people over the last couple of days that I feel a bit like the queen. I have done very little around this conference. I have been wheeled out today and I have given lots of people hugs and kisses and welcomes and I have waved at a few people, and I think I'm going to be wheeled back. The team in Include Youth has been phenomenal in organising this. As always our admin staff have been exceptional, all the other staff have been incredibly supportive, the policy machine, and that's what I'll call them, have been dynamic, they have been directed, they have been detailed, they have been quite awesome. And they have been supported by what can only be described as Conferencezilla Lorraine Thompson who has got everything timed to within an inch and it's been a whole organisational approach so I do want to thank, personally I want to thank all the staff, every, each and every one of you who have made this happen.

I also want to thank everybody else who participated, Paddy, Dave, Kathleen, John and Lesley of course. I will thank Phil as well and Debbie this morning. You have been very generous with your time, your views and your experiences and thank you very much.

Of course I want to thank the Minister who has taken his time out of a busy schedule and has always been very open and receptive to any efforts and requests that we make. And our young people even for stalking him on Rathlin Island a few months ago so wherever you go you will see, you will find us. So that's as much as I want to say. Thank you very much. I hope we will continue working with you both through this process of the consultation, but also into, as you have heard, the years ahead as we oversee the implementation of this review, as

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we look at the things that have been, what's the word, have been left out and we need to continue work on as we look at the legislation.

So again we'll look forward to continuing to work with you and I'm just going to leave you with one final thought. It's been a long old day, but we started the day with 4 young people, we now have between Darryl and Lee and with the support of David and Michael, we now have a 15 point plan. We will be publishing that 15 point plan and if we do nothing else and if you do nothing else after this conference, please have a look at it and have a think about it. Because I know I will be going back into my organisation and I will definitely be reading both Darryl and Leyton's suggestions and having a really good, long think about how we can move forward on them. So thank you very much, I hope those of you who are going home have a safe journey. Those of you who are members of Include Youth or friends of Include Youth our AGM is a 5.30, it is known as a legally compliant, any funder in the room, as a legally compliant AGM, but a very quick one. So please please stay and just hear about the fantastic work we have been doing over the last year. Thank you very much. ”

Some comments from the Evaluation

“Having the review team explain some findings was very useful”

“really enjoyed the speakers and the members of the review team who spoke”

“I was unaware of the finding on arrival and feel very well informed on leaving”

“As always from Include Youth – the voices of young people have been heard very well”

“excellent inputs – bit more would be great – very impressed by effort to have input from young person in Hydebank”

“Great input from the young people. A great reminder of the prevalent issues”

“To enhance this section it would be good to have a yp and family member – early intervention for the prevention of offending”

“It would have been good to hear the perspective of statutory sector in terms of how the review might affect their work. Too many presentations with the same views”

“just wanted to hear more really enjoyed research from prof Lesley McAra”

“Very interesting – good to hear the overlap of stakeholders. Frustrations apparent”

“Very useful indeed – Paddy Kelly, Sara Boyce’s presentations in particular as well as Edel Quinn”

“Yes as well as being stimulated to see how ours and other organisations can support in filling the gaps, esp when issue of delay pertains”

“Workshop was useful and informative but could have focused more on tackling reoffending”

“David Ford’s address – it would be good to have a follow up address in 6 months time and ongoing”

“loved the day loved the idea of # but would have been nice to see tweets live or on display over lunch after screened for appropriateness”

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“Very helpful in informing our thinking re: evaluation of the YJR report and in formulating our response to the consultation”

“Good to get different perspectives on Youth Justice particularly from young people who have experienced the system. Also value the research documents which I can use in my work and to influence policy making to reflect actual needs of children and young people rather than perceived needs”

“Very useful to explore Early intervention debate from a justice perspective. Great input from Edinburgh research. Really informative – great support from staff, great inputs from young people”

“Very well organised and run conference – thankyou!”

“I mourn the lack of interface of social care/social services”

“Excellent conference – as always”

“Well done”

“Thankyou, very well run and helpful”

“Really enjoyed it – well done”

“A very useful day”

“Productive day”

“once again excellent Include youth event, thank you Jackie et al”

“This has been a conference of the highest quality exceptionally well organised with a diversity of content of an excellent standard”

“Thankyou – overall well organised and thought out valuable event”

“A very good conference – just need more time”

“Excellent conference”

“Well done a massive team effort”

“Thanks enjoyed it”

“Excellent conference – congratulations to all involved Lesley McAra was brilliant”.

Include Youth would like to thank all speakers and chairs who contributed to the conference. We would also like to thank all delegates for taking the time to attend and participate in the discussions through out the day.