



Children **in** Northern Ireland

17th August 2015

Age GFS Consultation
Room E3.18
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SR

Dear Sir/Madam

Consultation Response on Proposals to Extend Age Discrimination Legislation (Age Goods, Facilities and Services)

Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) are the regional umbrella body for the children's sector in Northern Ireland.

CiNI represents the interests of its 160 member organisations providing policy, information, training and participation support services to members in their direct work with and for children and young people. CiNI membership also includes colleagues in the children's statutory sector recognising that the best outcomes for children and young people are increasingly achieved working in partnership with all those who are committed to improving the lives of children and young people in NI.

CiNI welcomes this opportunity to provide some feedback on the **Proposals to Extend Age Discrimination Legislation**. We trust that our comments will be positively used to inform the next step in the process.

CiNI strongly believe that the exclusion of children below the age of 16 will in itself discriminate on the basis of age and will not afford those under 16 the protection from discrimination in accessing goods, facilities and services. We also believe it is incompatible with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998). We wish to highlight the views of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, when in October 2008 they urged the UK to take urgent action to address negative age discrimination against children.¹

¹ Concluding Observations on the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. CRC/C/GBR/CO/4. Paragraphs 24 and 25.

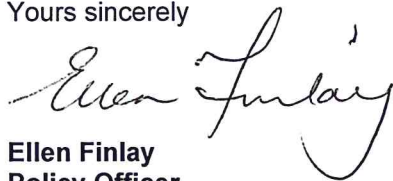
Moreover, Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) states the right to protection from discrimination² for all age ranges. We therefore believe that if this policy goes through with the exclusion of young people below the age of 16, the Government will be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

We firmly believe that all children and young people have the right to have equal access to goods, facilities and services regardless of their age. We see no evidence presented in this consultation that shows us those under 16 should be excluded. It is sometimes argued that protecting children and young people against age discrimination would mean legal action against service providers. There is no such evidence of this happening, indeed we believe having clear and robust legislation and guidance, public awareness raising and including appropriate exceptions would overcome any concerns.

It is our view that age discrimination against children and young people must be taken seriously. We therefore recommend that children and young people under 16 are included within this Bill.

We hope you find these comments useful. If you wish to discuss these in detail please get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'F'.

Ellen Finlay
Policy Officer

² Article 14 of the ECHR prohibits discrimination with respect to rights under the Convention, i.e. an applicant must prove discrimination in the enjoyment of a specific right that is guaranteed elsewhere in the Convention, such as the right to education, a fair trial, the right to protection from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, the right to life, the right to respect for privacy and family life, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association etc.