Policy that protects the rights and well-being of children and young people is a common concern, particularly during this period of economic uncertainty. This paper is a summary of the second report of the Children and Youth Programme which provides academic analysis of a rights-based approach to policy in relation to children and young people in Ireland and Northern Ireland [1].The key conclusions from the report are:

1. The General Measures of Implementation are a clear bench mark for policy development

The General Measures are intrinsic benchmarks to the policy process and to fulfilling a rights-based agenda. Their cross-cutting nature reflects their value as elementary tools for 'good' policy and their potential to consolidate aspects of rights and well-being to improve the lives of children and young people.

2. The core requirements of co-ordinated practice, comprehensive data, transparent resource allocation and wide-spread dissemination are the basic tools for 'good' policy.

The universal relevance of these core requirements can enhance the rights and well-being of children and young people in a number of ways:

- Standardised processes for the collection of disaggregated data can be replicated and mainstreamed within all government departments and public authorities to fulfil implementation of the Convention. This does not necessarily require additional resources, rather the optimised use of existing resources and curtailment of unnecessary expenditure.
- Collaboration with public agencies and research institutes can help to compose a full picture of children and young people's lives as well as identify gaps in data.
- Robust financial systems based on the principles of accessibility, transparency and participation can offer some reassurance that government commitments are made with the best interests of children as the foremost consideration.
- The linking of both policy decisions, funding and outcomes will enable better identification of successful programmes and associated costs and ensure that resources are invested wisely and directed to those who need it most.
- Training and dissemination amongst those working with or on behalf of children and young people is essential to promoting an appreciation of the inter-related developmental processes of children's lives as well as knowledge of the obligations of the Convention.

3. Good policy intrinsically safeguards the general principles of the Convention and ensures that children and young people are the foremost consideration in any policy that affects them.

The circumstances of children's lives are not an unknown entity and a significant proportion of children continue to exist at the margins of society and have their rights denied. Children and young people have a significant role as active participants in the promotion, protection and monitoring of their rights as well as in their capacity to influence decision-making and achieve change.

1 taken with the first publication in the Children and Youth Programme (CYP) series, A Rights-Based Approach to Monitoring Children and Young People's Well-Being

Alignment of a rights-based approach with the whole-child framework is a powerful lens through which government actions and decisions affecting children and young people can be examined. By placing different aspects of childhood and adolescence within this dual framework, it becomes possible to explore coherent policy options that realistically connect and protect the singular experience of being young.

4. Collaborative partnerships across all sectors are essential if 'good' policy that protects the rights and well-being of children and young people is to evolve.

Almost every area of children's policy requires collaboration to ensure the development and implementation of programmes and services that meet the needs of the children and young people for whom it is intended. Adopting a collaborative approach has the potential to meet the obligations of the Convention, and to enhance policy and provision.

5. Training should be a statutory requirement for all professional groups working with children and young people

A statutory requirement for child-centred training creates capacity for a rights respecting culture where the guiding principles of the Convention should underpin policy decisions on issues affecting children and young people. This has implications for how policy is developed and implemented. The transformative potential of informed professionals to progress children's services from the concept of welfare to that of rights entitlement is to be encouraged.

The Children and Youth Programme (CYP), through the UNESCO Chairs, is committed to supporting a rights-based approach to policy development and implementation in both jurisdictions and will work collaboratively with key stakeholders to further this agenda. This will be achieved by applying the framework to monitor child well-being using a rights-based approach outlined in the first CYP report and by collecting, synthesising and making available information based, in the first instance, on the general measures. The CYP will begin to explore this through its Special Report Series, focusing on policy relating to youth justice, education, mental health and civic participation.

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