



**Children's Rights Alliance**  
for England



# RIGHT2REPLY

OFFICE OF THE  
*Children's*  
COMMISSIONER

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## What was it and how did it come about?

In 2004, Young NCB's Advisory Group of young people chose the issue of children's rights as one of the things they wanted Young NCB to work on. They wanted to make sure that other children and young people knew about their rights and decided the best way to do this was to run events around the country. It was decided that the events would also be a good opportunity to look at the topical issue of the way that young people are represented in the media.

Young NCB joined forces with Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) and UNICEF UK and set to work planning the Roadshow. Two young people from each organisation made up a steering group who worked really hard to help plan events that would be interesting and fun for everyone who attended. The Children's Commissioner's Office gave us money to run the roadshows and supported us all the way.

## Who, what, when and where?

198 children and young people aged 8-17, and 50 adults from all over England came to the Roadshow. The Roadshow was made up of 4 events which were held in March and April in Brighton, Blackpool, Birmingham and London.

At the events there were two sets of workshops. The first one was to give an introduction to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and to look at the difference between our 'wants' (like mobile phones and holidays) and our 'needs' (like clean water and protection from neglect). People in the

workshops also talked about which articles in the CRC were most important to them. The convention has 54 articles, which states all the rights that children and young people have.

The second set of workshops was an opportunity for participants to discuss the way children and young people are shown in the media. The feeling was that young people are given a bad reputation in the media and that there are far more reports about the negative things that young people have done than the positive things.



### The fun stuff

To make sure that everyone was having a good time, during lunchtime everyone had the opportunity to take part in fun workshops. People chose from African drumming, circus skills and break dancing and really showed off their hidden talents!

There was also a graffiti wall where everyone could write about how they felt the media portrayed young people and what they thought should be done about it. Lots of people also brought in newspaper articles about young people to stick on the wall to show examples.

Some of the young people were given the very important job of being media reps. Some had to film the event and interview other young people, and others acted as reporters for the day and produced a newsletter.



## What did people who came along say?

There were lots of great discussions and everyone had the chance to get their views heard by other young people, adults and the Children's Commissioner for England, Al Aynsley-Green. Al came along to the London event and took part in a 'question and answer' session. We found out lots about him and his job and what he thought about the way young people are shown in the media.

Everyone at the events had something to say about how the media unfairly treats young people; here are just a few of the quotes:

*"[It] changes young people in a way and has a big influence young people's behaviour and attitude"*

*"Show the respect we deserve and maybe us so called 'yobs' will show it back"*

*"We should forget the bad things not 'Big it Up' in the national/local press. FOCUS ON THE GOOD STUFF!"*

*"It makes black male kids sound bad when they are not. It needs to STOP"*

*"All the negative stereotypes given to teenagers will cause them to have a self-fulfilling prophecy"*

*"If the media focussed on the positive things we do, people may have a positive view towards us"*

*"In the media, emphasis is put on violence, sex, drugs etc. Doesn't set a good example for teenagers and kids alike – the media have a responsibility to promote positive things rather than celebrities with addictions"*



## Next Steps

The Roadshow was a success and lots of children and young people (and adults!) went away knowing lots more about children's rights. But why stop there? The young people's steering group decided that they wanted to pass messages on to the next generation of young people and decision-makers to make sure that children's rights are still being talked about. They also wanted to see if in the future, the way that children and young people are represented in the media becomes more positive.

So...

At the London event, the Children's Commissioner was presented with a 'time-capsule' to be re-opened in 10 years time. The time-capsule was filled with recorded messages, decorated t-shirts and newspaper clippings.



Young NCB, CRAE and UNICEF UK thought that some really important messages had come out of the events so they wrote a report to the Children's Commissioners Office letting them know.

Here's what we said:

Most children and young people had never heard of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and really enjoyed learning about their rights.

➡ There needs to be more education on children's rights for children and young people all over England through similar events.

The participants were unhappy with the way that children and young people are portrayed in the media and felt that something needs to be done about the way they are stereotyped.

➡ Organisations like the Children's Commissioner's Office need to do more to challenge the negative representation of young people in the media.

Everyone really enjoyed the opportunity to express their views and hoped that what they said could make a positive difference.

➡ There should be more opportunities for children and young people to participate in matters that affect their lives and to express their views.