

## Choosing the right man

**A Young People's Advisory Board member tells Children's Express reporters how he helped to chose Northern Ireland's new Children's Commissioner.**

*Imagine you were a young person who had helped to make history. Michael Leathem, one of the Young People's Advisory Forum helped to select the new Children's Commissioner Nigel Williams. He gives Sean Walker and Clare Hughes of Children's Express the inside line.*

"It's hard to believe now. It's all over and now I don't know what to do, now that it's all happened. It formed part of my life for five months," he said.

"It sounds a wee bit sad but we've put so much into this. Looking back I can't really believe that in the middle of working for the advisory forum I was doing my GCSE's.

"I'm really confident in Nigel's ability. During the roleplay I knew he was the guy that I wanted. He related well to the young people, on the panel.

"It's a rare skill and I think that's why he'll make a good commissioner. He's someone who can relate to children and young people but also have right balance and be able to influence key decision makers."

"Our facilitators have just been excellent, Kevin McKenna, Rodney Green, Cathy Bell, they've all given brilliant, brilliant support to all the young people on the panel. It's really hard to describe, they really helped to make the experience and were always there for you.

"When we first met we were obviously nervous. At the first residential I didn't really know anybody, I think I knew one person.

"From that night we did lots of team building exercises, from the very first one I got to know people really well.

"The whole thing about the first residential was team building and drawing up the person specifications for the job. We were learning about the job as well as learning about each other. I was speaking to the commissioner and I realised that he still wants to stay in contact and consult with us.

"He's really up for it. He's going to need help appointing his staff for his office and then there's also the Children's Strategy coming up, the 10-year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland. Obviously it's a big thing.

"I didn't ever think we would get to this day. The children's sector has worked really hard to make this come true. All the hard work starts now, but we're up for it."

**About the team**This story was produced by Sean Walker and Clare Hughes. It was published in the [Irish News](#).

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