Expressions of interest

Save the Children

CHILDREN AND PEACE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: 30 YEARS OF EVIDENCE

Summary

Save the Children is seeking to commission a synthesis and critical assessment of evidence on children's experiences of, and participation in, the Northern Ireland peace process and the development of peace over the last 30 years, ahead of the 30th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement in April 2028.

The research will examine what has changed or persisted in children's lives and how their experiences and priorities have informed decisions about peace and society after conflict. It will distinguish opportunities to express views from involvement in decision-making and assess the evidence of children's influence, with particular attention throughout to children experiencing poverty and inequality. It should also consider the Northern Ireland evidence alongside relevant international literature to put the findings in context and draw out learning for initiatives supporting children's participation and influence here and elsewhere.

The findings will help establish an evidence base for wider work with children and young people to explore the future of peace in Northern Ireland, building on what children have already said, what has been learned and what remains unresolved.

The successful individual or organisation will produce a research report, an accessible summary and a presentation of findings. The commission will draw on existing evidence and will not involve new primary research.

Background

Save the Children works around the world to ensure that children's rights are realised. In Northern Ireland, we have worked with and alongside children, families, and communities to address poverty, inequality and realise children's rights for over 70 years. As we approach the 30th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), children in Northern Ireland continue to experience poverty, inequality and the legacy and consequences of conflict and division in their lives. The upcoming anniversary is an important opportunity to reflect on children's experiences of the last 30 years, while also looking forward with children and young people to consider what this tells us about the future that children want to help shape.

There is already a substantial body of literature documenting children's experiences of conflict and its aftermath in Northern Ireland. This includes academic studies, research undertaken with children and young people, government publications and work by children's and youth organisations. There is also an existing body of evidence internationally on children's experiences of armed conflict, their participation in peace processes, and their roles in peacebuilding and post-conflict societies.[1]

As a first step, we want to understand what can be learned by bringing the evidence together. This should provide an evidence base of what children have already said about these issues, as well as inform future work by Save the Children and its partners with children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to synthesise and critically assess evidence on children's experiences of, and participation in, the Northern Ireland peace process and the development of peace over the last 30 years. It will examine how children have experienced and contributed to peace, what has changed or persisted in their lives, and how they understand and experience relationships, connection, division and change within their communities.

The research should examine how children's experiences and priorities have informed decisions about peace and society after conflict. It will distinguish between opportunities to express views and involvement in decision-making, and assess the evidence of children's influence on decisions, policies and practice. Particular attention should be given throughout to children experiencing poverty and inequality, and to differences between children's experiences, perspectives and opportunities to influence decisions.

The research should also consider the evidence from Northern Ireland alongside relevant international literature to put the findings in context and draw out learning that can inform initiatives supporting children's participation and influence in peace processes and post-conflict societies elsewhere.

Key questions

The review should aim to answer the following questions:

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[1] See for example: *Childhood in Transition: Experiencing marginalisation and conflict in Northern Ireland* (Save the Children, 2009), *Navigating Risk: Understanding the Impact of the Conflict on Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Browne, B., & Dwyer, C. 2014), Young People of the Peace Process* (Northern Ireland Youth Forum, 2021) *It Didn't End in 1998: Examining the impacts of conflict legacy across generations* (Siobhán McAlister et al, 2021), Adult's War and Young Generation's Peace: children's participation in armed conflict, post conflict and peace building (Save the Children, 2008), *Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding* (Global Partnership for Children & Youth in Peacebuilding, 2016), What works to amplify the rights and voices of youth in peace and resilience building? (UNICEF, 2022), *Building Peace with Children* (Save the Children 2023).

- **What has peace meant for children in Northern Ireland?** What have children and young people experienced and said about violence, division, identity, belonging, their rights, opportunities and aspirations for the future? What has changed over 30 years, and what has persisted?
- **How have children participated in shaping peace and society after conflict?** What roles have they played in peacebuilding, reconciliation, community life and decisions about the future? What opportunities have they had to participate in decision-making, what evidence is there of their influence, and how has this changed over time?
- **How have poverty and inequality shaped children's experiences and participation in decision making**? How have experiences of peace and opportunities to influence decisions differed between children? Whose experiences and priorities are represented in the evidence, and whose are missing?
- **What does this evidence provide as a starting point for exploring the future with children?** What concerns, aspirations and proposals have children already expressed, which have been acted on, and which remain unaddressed? What issues and questions should be brought into further work with children about the future of peace and their role in shaping it?
- **What are the key learnings for Northern Ireland and elsewhere?** How do the findings relate to relevant international evidence on children's participation in peace processes and post-conflict societies? What learning can inform initiatives here and elsewhere, and what questions are unanswered?

Service requirements

Approach

We would expect the review and analysis to include:

- **A structured synthesis of 30 years of evidence from Northern Ireland**, covering the period leading to the GFA in 1998 through to the present. This should include academic research, existing literature reviews, government and public-sector publications, reports from children's and youth organisations, and other relevant grey literature.
- **Analysis of children's experiences of peace and their participation in shaping it,** identifying changes and continuities over time. Particular attention should be given throughout to children experiencing poverty and inequality, differences within and between communities, and whose experiences and perspectives are underrepresented in the evidence.
- **A critical assessment of children's involvement in decision-making,** distinguishing opportunities to express views, involvement in developing priorities and proposals, and influence over decisions.
- **Consideration of relevant international literature on children's experiences and participation** in peace processes and post-conflict societies, to put the Northern Ireland findings in context and draw out learning that can inform future initiatives here and elsewhere,

- **A clear assessment of the strengths, limitations and gaps in the evidence**, and recommendations for further research and/or initiatives in the future.

We are not expecting the commissioned individual or organisation to undertake new primary research, collect new testimony from children or conduct a comprehensive systematic review of all international literature. The emphasis should be on synthesis, critical assessment and identifying new insights from existing evidence, building on rather than duplicating previous literature reviews.

Deliverables

The deliverables should include:

- An inception document, setting out the proposed research framework, key sources and existing reviews, approach to synthesis and assessment, and any proposed refinements to the research questions.
- A written research report, suitable for publication, bringing together the evidence, critical analysis, main findings, gaps and implications for Northern Ireland and internationally.
- An accessible summary of the findings, including the issues, priorities and aspirations children have identified, what has changed and what remains unresolved. This should support external engagement and provide a foundation for subsequent work with children to explore the future, enabling them to build on, question and add to what is already known.
- A source list and bibliography, identifying the principal academic and grey literature reviewed, including relevant sources of children's own testimony and perspectives.
- A presentation and discussion of findings with Save the Children and relevant colleagues and partner organisations.

Budget

The indicative budget for this project is £15,000–£25,000 (or equivalent in euros, depending on the successful bidder's location).

We welcome proposals within this range, with the proposed approach, and deliverables clearly set out. Proposals should explain how the review will prioritise the evidence within the available budget, including the depth of the Northern Ireland synthesis, the scope of the international literature, and any limitations on assessing children's influence or tracing responses to their priorities.

Proposals should state whether costs include VAT.

Timescale

We anticipate the review taking approximately three to six months from the start of the contract, depending on the proposed approach.

We would expect engagement between Save the Children and the successful contractor during the project to involve:

- A project inception meeting to agree the approach and clarify questions.
- An early review of the evidence base and existing literature to confirm the research framework and scope.
- An interim meeting to review emerging findings, analysis and any issues.
- A final meeting to include a presentation and discussion of the findings.

The final timetable and milestones will be agreed with the successful contractor.

Contract

As a donor funded body, Save the Children is committed to ensuring our resources are used as efficiently as possible, in order that we can focus them on achieving maximum impact for children and that our arrangements with third party suppliers represent value for money. We expect this approach to be demonstrated from any contractor we do business with. The successful bidder will be asked to sign Save the Children's standard services agreement.

Your application

Your application should be no more than four pages and should include:

- Organisational details.
- Overview of relevant experience.
- Your proposed approach to the questions, methodology and deliverables.
- Proposed timetable and level of effort.
- Any risks or limitations you have identified.
- Cost proposal.
- Contact details.

Applications will be reviewed by Save the Children, and selected bidders may be invited to a panel interview to discuss their proposal.

Questions and closing date

If you'd like to discuss the application or have any questions about this tender, please contact Maev McDaid (m.mcdaid@savethechildren.org.uk) by 16th November.

To submit a proposal, please send your application to:

m.mcdaid@savethechildren.org.uk

by 23rd November 2026.

Panel interviews are planned to take place the week commencing 4th December.