

PICTURE your RIGHTS

A Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

from Children Living in Ireland

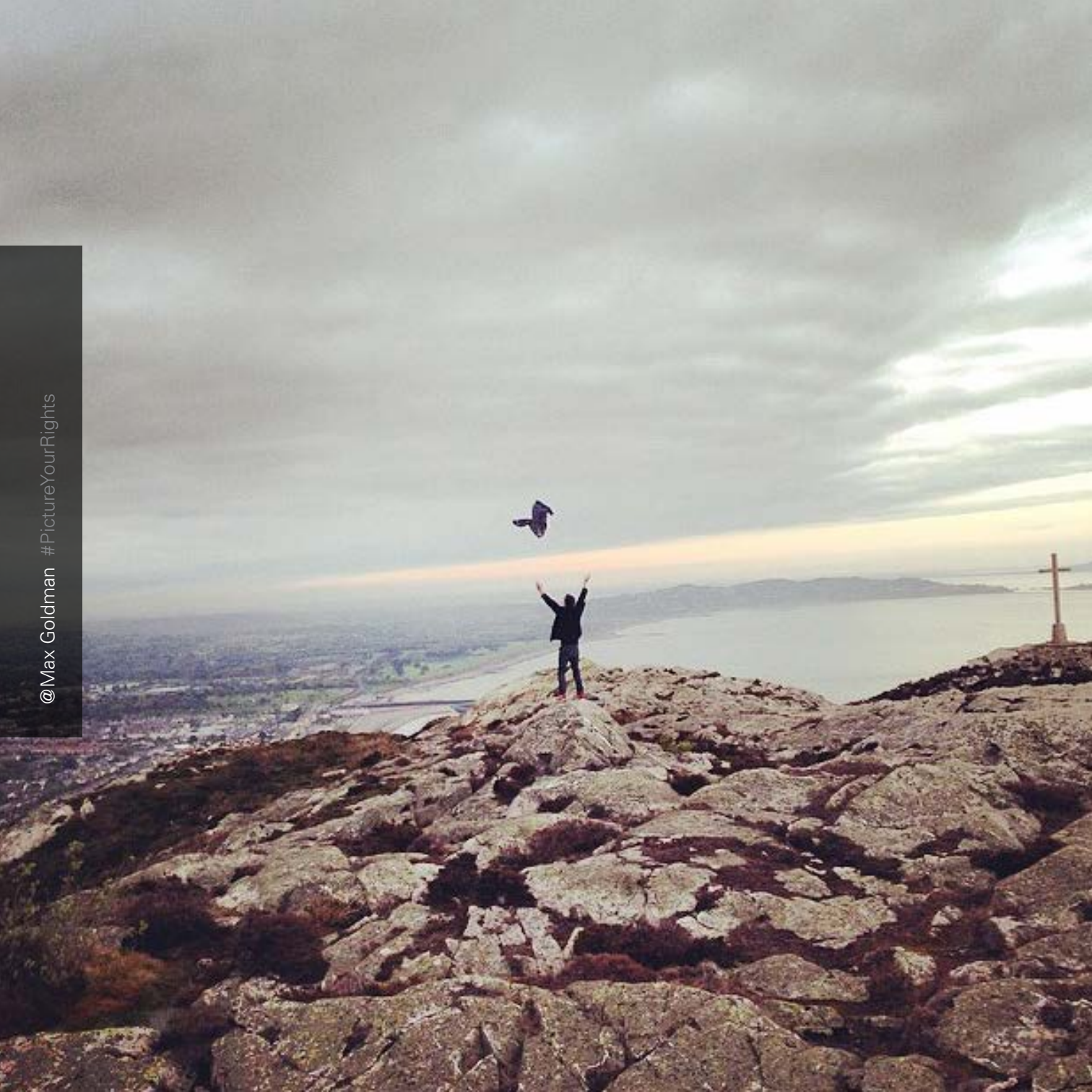
May 2015

**CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS**
ALLIANCE



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs

unicef 
IRELAND



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Dear Committee on the Rights of the Child...

We are a group of 31 young people from all over Ireland and we come from many different backgrounds. Some of us lived in countries as far away as Pakistan and Lithuania and others are part of groups such as the Traveller Community, some are home schooled and others live in Direct Provision.

We represent the voices of children and young people from all over Ireland and their concerns. There are **1,148,687 children in Ireland** that make up over 25% of the population. The number of children in Ireland increased by over 13% between 2002 and 2011 and Ireland now has the highest proportion of children in the European Union. This report represents the view of children of all ages living in Ireland.

We began this report in December of 2014 when an initial planning group was set up. At our first meeting we came up with the idea of “picturing your rights”, as a creative way to share with you the views of children and young people in Ireland. We also felt it was a great way for even young children or people without literacy skills to get involved.

We began an online campaign and asked children and young people to post their photos and submissions on Instagram so we could share the different issues children and young people face in Ireland today.

Many workshops were also held throughout the country with groups of all ages, including those under four.

The report has been written under four themes. These were based on the topics that were coming up again and again. We have highlighted the issues in each theme that surprised and concerned us the most. They are the “spotlight issues.”

Being Valued. As children and young people we are often treated with disrespect in school and in our communities. Our voices and needs are often ignored or not prioritised. This is especially true when we become teenagers.

Mind and Body. We are often experiencing high levels of stress because of bullying, exams, peer pressure and issues relating to our safety and well-being. This impacts on us greatly and affects our physical and mental health.

Living Together. Poverty and inequality in Ireland has the greatest impact on us and often determines our future. We focused in particular on the way those of us living in Direct Provision or within the Travelling Community are treated differently and suffer from inequality.

Our Future. Our concerns over our future often seem ignored. Our education system needs to better meet our needs now and in to the future. Especially with regard to the role of religion in our schools. We also feel the environment is a problem that is being left to us to solve. We have a right to a clean planet that will provide for us into the future.

This report represents the issues we feel need to be addressed in order for our rights to be respected and our hopes and dreams for our futures to be fulfilled. We want the Irish Government to hear us and make us a priority. We deeply hope you will take this report on board and care about our views.

We want an Ireland where we are valued, treated equally and made to feel like we all belong. We want an Ireland where our opinions are heard and action is taken based on them. We want an Ireland that respects us and our futures.

The Picture Your Rights Project Team.

Who we are

Top Row, left to right: Andrius Sirvys, Fintan O'Dwyer, Adam Farrell, Nathan McDonagh, Kaitlyn Maher, Iobhar Stokes.

Second Row: Finn Rankin, Phillip Manifold, Amy Shields, Fiona Tobin, Leigh Brady, Ciana Cooney.

Third Row: Danielle Gayson, Ashleigh Kiernan, Kirsty Hayes, Megan Ní Mhathúna.

Fourth Row: Holly Farrell, Minahil Sarfraz, Leah Walsh, Natasha Maimba.

Missing from picture: Alex Lawson, Calvin Niang, Kevin Seery, Luke Norton, Sasanga Ilapperuma, Aiyana Helder, Paddy Collins, Ryan Collins, Darragh Barry- Donnachie, Cliona Martin.



Road to the Report: Generating ideas...



Nominated by our youth organisations, 12 of us from around Ireland got together in December to talk about the Children's Report and how best to get young people involved. We came up with the 'Picture Your Rights' campaign.



We decided to create an online campaign to involve as many people as possible. We chose photography/pictures as a way to capture what life is like in Ireland and also because we felt it was inclusive of all ages and skill levels.



We created a website and Instagram page to inform people about the project and to collect their input. We divided the Convention articles in to 8 themes and with the help of UNICEF created online discussion cards to help young people talk about the issues.



We wanted all children to participate, so we met with "early years" groups and primary schools to see how best to include all ages in the report.

Road to the Report: Reaching out...



To spread the word and reach out to as many as we could, we went on TV, radio and spoke with journalists. We also held a National Day of Action on 4th February 2015. Here we are on a TV talking about it.



There are certain children in Ireland who face discrimination or whose voices aren't always heard. To ensure they were included, we held specific focus groups with travellers, teenage boys who were coming in to contact with the guards (Irish police) and asylum seekers being held in 'direct provision'.



We spread the word to Children's Rights Alliance members to get their children and young people involved. Social media was a great tool for us to communicate with each other and for spreading the word. We tried things like 'Thunderclap' on Facebook and Twitter and challenges on Instagram.



To add a bit of fun to the mix, we held a photography workshop in Dublin with three up-and-coming young Irish photographers. They helped us capture our ideas in images as we toured the city together.

Road to the Report: On the road...



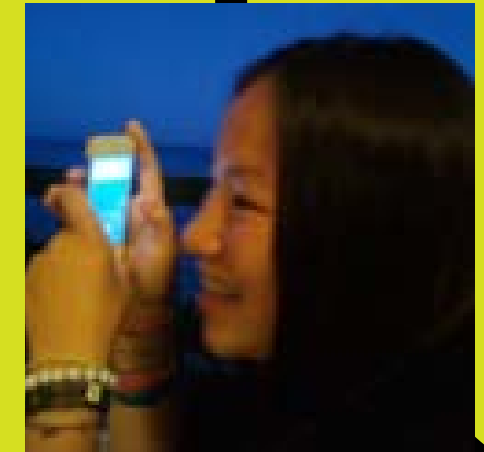
We also went to schools with the help of UNICEF. We held discussions and children filled in worksheets with how well they felt their rights were being protected. Primary school children felt that, overall, Ireland was a pretty good place to live and that they were getting a good education.



Many secondary boys' and girls' schools in Ireland are separated by gender, so we made sure to go to boys, girls and mixed schools. We also ensured every year was covered. Many issues were raised like bullying and exam stress. Most children felt we could improve secondary school.

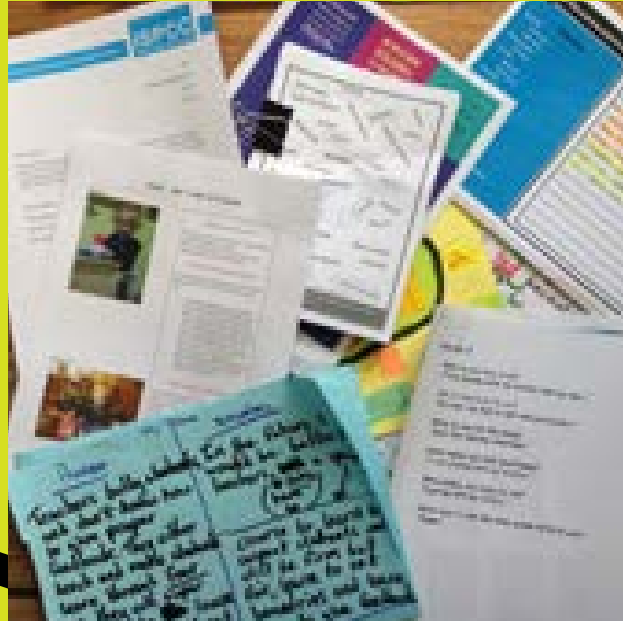


Classes were divided into small groups and we held 40-80 minute discussions with students. They filled in worksheets with their notes and recommendations. Much of the feedback centred around respect, school ethos and choice in education.



We held two online surveys. One with the help of the National Parents Council Primary which received responses from 2,090 children. The other survey was on the Picture Your Rights website, where teens could share more information about the issues that affect them.

Road to the Report: **Pulling it all together...**



In total, we spent two months collecting submissions from all over Ireland. We received photos, pictures, poems, videos, results from two online surveys and reports. We recruited more young people on to the planning group bringing the total to 32. We met at the end of February to pull it all together.



We did this by sorting through all of the quotes and images we had gathered to decide what were the big issues and what needed to be highlighted. We divided in to groups and created theme boards under the eight themes.



We discussed each of the theme boards and drew out the recommendations based on what we had received. We decided that the themes overlapped significantly so we combined them to make four themes and four highlighted issues.



The following Saturday was spent writing and editing the report by a smaller group of representatives. We also wrote the letter and action points reflected in the report. We hope this report gives you a picture of children's rights in Ireland.

Survey results: The issues for children...

Source: National Parents Council Primary Survey
of 2,090 children aged between 5-13



Survey results: The issues for young people...

Source: www.pictureyourrights.com
Survey of 275 young people





@Max Goldman #MySpaces

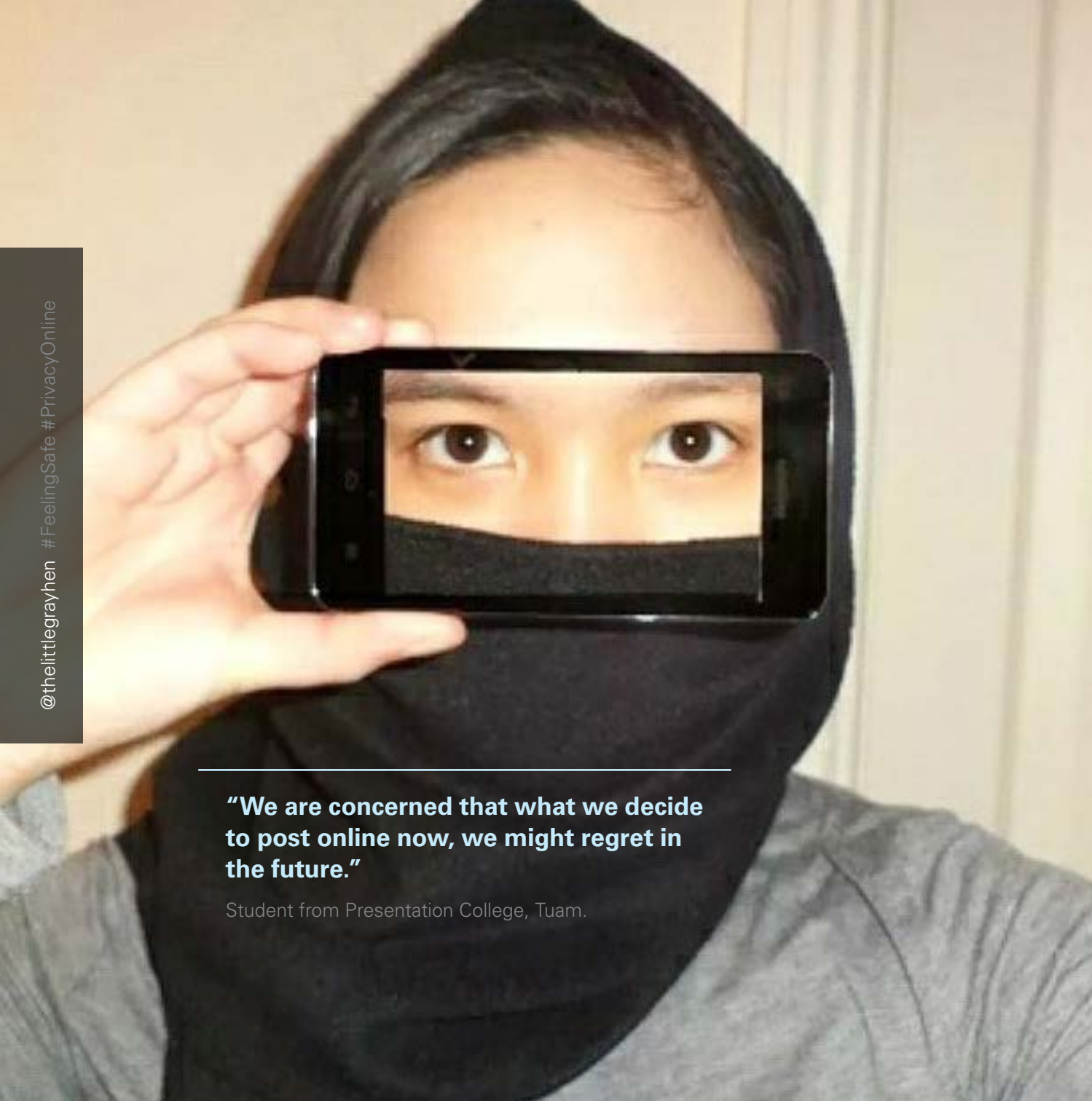
Being Valued

Taking part in our communities

It's important that we are listened to, that we have a say in our lives and the decisions that affect us. Who we are matters, and it is important that it is respected. We need to have safe places where we feel we belong, where we are comfortable to be ourselves and express our opinions. We need to be involved in deciding what those places look like and the facilities within them. Young people are important members of the community and need to be included.

"I don't think we have a voice when the government is making new decisions in our local communities."

Student from Arklow Christian Brothers Secondary School, Wicklow.



“We are concerned that what we decide to post online now, we might regret in the future.”

Student from Presentation College, Tuam.

@Gabhan O’Tighearnaigh #Cyberbullying



“Cyberbullying is a problem for children. Adults need to help children find solutions both in school and at home.”

Student from Presentation College, Tuam.

@Aisling Tar #ThingsToDo



“There are not enough facilities or things to do for 15+. There can be a lot of cost involved.”

Member of Comhairle na nÓg Youth Group, Roscommon.

“I have no identity. I am mixed identity and do not have a place in the census or school survey to record who I am.”

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey.

“We feel included at Comhairle na nÓg because everyone has a say and its great banter (seriously).”

Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg.

“We like when people listen to us because when they do what I say, it feels good. If you want to say something amazing you are heard. I’m happy when I get a chance to talk, people help me, it makes you feel happy, and sad when they don’t listen.”

Student from Dalkey School Project National School, Dublin.

“Ireland can be safe in some places, it all depends on where you live, for example in Longford the countryside feels safe but in town, some areas are very rough especially certain streets and estates.”

Participant from Longford Comhairle na nÓg.



@Danielle Gayson #PeerPressure

@Sam Garland #BeingMe



“We need to learn how to deal with peer pressure to post pictures of ourselves online.”

Student from Our Lady’s Bower, Athlone.

“Night time hugs with my mum makes me happy or when I get a chance to talk.”

Student from Dalkey School Project National School, Dublin.

“Young people are more open to different sexualities and cultures but can’t do anything to change prejudice as older people are more narrow minded.”

Participant from Comhairle na nÓg, Roscommon.

“Young people are being ignored simply because they are younger.”

Student from Presentation College, Tuam.





@Gavin Mac Aonghusa #FreeToBeMe

@aar505n #LGBTRights

@Megan Nimhathuna #BeingHeard



“Our sexuality deserves discussion and respect regardless of our school’s ethos.”

Amnesty Group from Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin.

“Our generation is more accepting of differences, with a better sense of equality.”

Participant from ISPCC Children’s Advisory Committee, Mayo.

“There is nowhere for us to go to just spend time with friends. Just sitting in groups in green areas beside our houses we are often moved on by the Gardaí when we are doing nothing wrong.”

Participant from Future Voices Group, Dublin.

“The good thing about being in Ireland is that we have our own language.”

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey.

@Foroige #BeingInvolved



“It feels good when someone listens, they make me happy by doing funny faces. I feel good when my mammy talks to me in the car. I like when my mammy listens to me because she always does.”

Child from Little Rascals Tullyallen, Louth.





@Max Goldman #Respect

Spotlight issue:

Respecting teens

Teen Focus Group (ages 15-16), Clondalkin, Dublin.

Interview recorded on 11th February 2015.

It feels like the police are there to harass, not to protect you. Most trouble happens because there is nothing to do - we just hang around on a wall. In richer areas teens have more to do, more money and more space in their houses. **The Guards are afraid of their parents.** The Guards feel like they can get away with everything and they overuse their power. We need to get enough of us to tell them to stop abusing their power and understand that we have rights too. **You can't just throw us in the back of a van.** They left me in a big concrete cell, freezing with only a pair of football shorts on. **I want to ask the Minister,** does she really know what goes on in our community, that some of us are being treated badly and **verbally and physically abused.** Do you care about the community or just your pay check? Juvenile Liaison Officers say they'll help but they don't. That all affects you when you're older; people look at you and think '**he wasn't a good kid**' and don't give you a job. Ever since I was a kid I had a bad temper but it's increased rapidly since the Guards started bothering us. **I find it harder to control and it keeps building.**



@Max Goldman #ChoiceInEducation

“The first time I got picked up (by Gardaí) was a month before me 14th birthday. They said it was for antisocial behaviour but it was because I was sitting on a wall.”

Participant from Teen Focus Group, Clondalkin.

“Young people feel Gardaí could follow up more on reported incidents rather than overlooking some of them.”

Children’s Advisory Committee
ISPCC, Monaghan.

“Teenagers don’t have places to go or things to do especially at night when we want to be with our friends. If we stop anywhere we are just moved on by the Gardaí.”

Student from Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin.

“You feel stressed, you’re always looking over your shoulder and it makes you anxious.”

Participant from Teen Focus Group, Clondalkin.



@Steve #Harassed



“Most trouble happens just because there is nothing to do.”

Participant from Teen Focus Group, Clondalkin.

“There are no spaces for older children, instead they use spaces designed for younger children, which is intimidating for them. We need teen spaces.”

Student from Our Lady of Bower, Athlone.

Being Valued: Action Points

Online

- Online safety and privacy needs to be addressed earlier in life. Every child of school going age must be educated on an annual basis about online safety and privacy.

Recreational spaces

- There needs to be more things for us to do and safer places to hang out.
- The Government needs to fund indoor and outdoor places for older teenagers to hangout like teenager playgrounds. Teens need more sheltered places to go – youth centres and youth groups are not always open.

- There needs to be more promotion of youth groups and things for us to get involved in. Youth Groups should be accessible to all young people.

School

- Respect us more in school.
- Involve us more in decision making and improve student councils.
- Let us have more of an identity at school.

Decision Making

- Parents, teachers and decision makers need to consult us more when they are making changes that affect our lives.

Being Valued Spotlight Issue: Respecting Teens

- Treat us in a just, safe and respectful manner and ensure we know our rights.
- Improve relationships between Gardaí and communities.
- Do more to protect us from harassment and violence on the street.

Being Valued: Stats and Explainers

- Voting age in Ireland is 18.
- Comhairle na nÓg are local government youth councils set up to give us a voice in the development of local services and policies. (www.comhairlenanog.ie)
- Great Banter = great fun
- 88% of children aged 4 to 13 think Ireland is a good place to be a child and 55% think their opinions are listened to. (NPCP Online Survey February 2015).



Mind and Body

Learning to take care of ourselves

Mental health and physical safety are the two main areas that we, as young people, are concerned about in Ireland. Bullying is the number one issue that worries us, followed closely by stress, and the pressures of school and home life. We are also concerned about our body image and physical health. We need adults to take on these concerns and ensure we learn more about how to protect ourselves, and find and use the support services available to us.

“Some schools are good at helping kids who have a disability, but others don’t tolerate kids with special needs. I had to move schools because of this.”

Student from Greystones Educate Together, Wicklow.

"I don't like when people hit me or tell jokes on me. The boys in my school hurt my feelings. Bullying makes me sad."

Child from National Parents Council
Primary Survey, Unknown.

@Lexi #SpaceRocket

@MellaMay #That'sMe



"I feel happy when people listen to me."

Participant from Barnardos,
Cork.

"I feel sad lying in the dark and Daddy turned off the lights."

Child from Little Rascals
Tullyallen, Louth.

“Drugs are more common than anything now. You either know where to get them or someone who can get them.”

Children’s Advisory Committee
ISPCC, Monaghan.

“It takes too long for the police to come if you call, it makes me feel unsafe.”

Participant from Longford Comhairle na nÓg.

“We worry about the fact that there is not enough hospital beds in hospitals and that waiting lists for children and adults are too long.”

Participant from ISPCC Children’s
Advisory Committee, Mayo.

“Ireland needs to do more about the problem of obesity.”

Student from St. Mary’s National
School, Garristown, Dublin



@jenna_binley #DeStress

“We need to have more time to relax and hang out with friends, exams and homework are too stressful on young people, especially the Leaving Cert.”

Participant from Future Voices Focus Group, Dublin.

@chels1234ea #FeelingSafe

@jamiekeed69 #PeerPressure



“Physical punishment should be banned for all ages.”

Participant from Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg.

“Alcohol and cigarettes are prevalent in shops and embedded in Irish culture, there are high levels of peer pressure (which children do not know how to refuse) encouraging children to smoke and drink alcohol.”

Student from Our Lady’s Bower, Athlone.



“School should have more activities for us to stay fit and reduce stress. They should be less of the main sports and not so competitive so all students enjoy them not just the sporty ones.”

Student from Arklow Christian Brothers Secondary School, Wicklow.



@Cottage Kids Pre-School #Play

@Aoife Forkin #AskMe

@aar505n #RightToInfo

@GavinMacA #Score

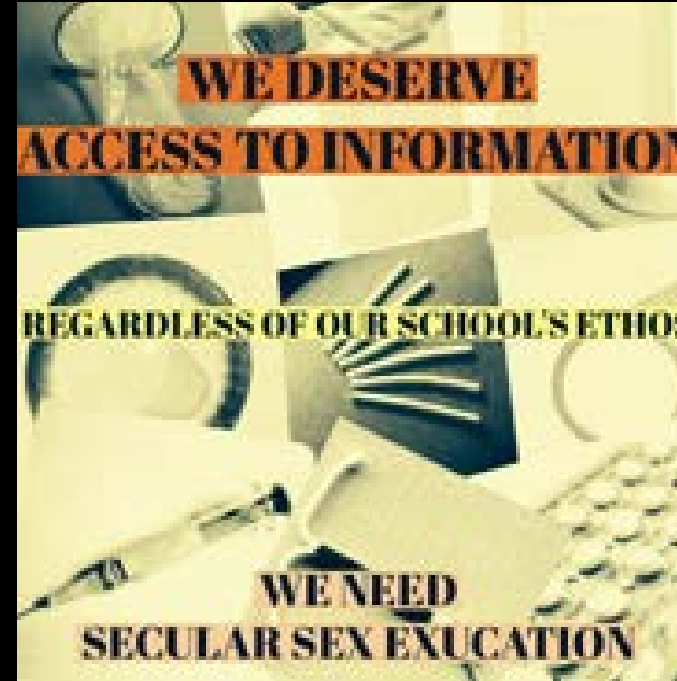


"I feel safe IN my bed... NOT under my bed... cos I can't float ON my bed! This is my bed... Look! And that's me in bed!"

Student from Cottage Kids Pre-School, Lusk, Dublin.

"Doctors and Gardaí don't really listen to us, and talk to our parents even if they are talking about us. Young people aren't generally listened to by older working people."

Participant from Children's Advisory Committee ISPC, Monaghan.



"We have the right to learn about information that can keep us safe regardless of our school's ethos. We need secular education."

Student from Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin.



"There is not enough P.E. at schools we do not have a P.E. hall for wet days or much sports equipment."

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey, Unknown.



@cianmp #BuyingBeer

“Most young people cave in to peer pressure and drink, despite disliking the taste and awareness of its effects. Individuals image plays a large role in their decision to drink. Adults talk about the good times, but hardly talk about the bad times and effects of drink.”

Participant from ISPC Children’s Advisory Committee, Mayo.

“I am in foster care with my twin brother and sister and we want to be at home with mummy and daddy. Mum and Dad never hurt us but the Judge said we have to stay in care until we are 18 but we want to go home.”

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey.





@Max Goldman #CopingWithStress

Spotlight issue:

Bullying, Mental Health and Stress

Nathan McDonagh; Focus Group Leader (ages 15-17), City Centre, Dublin.

Interview recorded on 28th March 2014.

The leaving cert is the biggest stress for us. Your whole future depends on how well you do on that one exam. **The exam is the only chance you have to prove what you know.** You could be having a bad day, or be in a bad mood, or tired, and it will ruin your entire future. **There's lots of peer pressure from your friends to do things you don't want to do but you feel like you have to.** There is so much pressure to be perfect and look perfect. Nowadays it's not just pressure for girls; lads have to put in more effort in our appearance; hair, the gym five days a week, tans. You feel pressure to look tall, blonde and pretty. **We think there should be a Photoshop logo put on all images when models have been altered.** We also worry about our community and the dangers and our safety. **We won't go walking around the park because of the people and the drugs.** There are syringes and glass bottles everywhere; we worry for our little brothers and sisters. **Online bullying is more dangerous because people don't see it.** I have a friend that tried to commit suicide because she was being bullied online. **People don't take it seriously.**

“No time to relax, due to too much school work. If you do something relaxing you miss out on school and have to catch up. It’s stressful.”

Student from Our Lady’s Bower, Athlone.



@sandcastleday #FeelingSafe



“Sometimes we don’t feel safe in school, not enough people to approach with our fears.”

Participant from Comhairle na nÓg, Roscommon.

@chels1234ea #Bullying



“I had to change primary schools because bullying was not dealt with.”

Participant from ISPCC’s Children’s Advisory Committee, Mayo.

“Bullying takes place throughout school life, including primary schools, the focus is too much on secondary school and cyberbullying.”

Student from Arklow Christian Brothers Secondary School, Wicklow.



Mind and Body: Action Points

Bullying

- Inform us of our safety options regarding bullying and abuse.
- There should be more local supports, both over the phone and through text, for those of us who are experiencing bullying and abuse.
- Clearer bullying policies are needed in school so that we all know how to report bullying and what happens to the bully if they are reported.

Abuse

- Society needs to be educated about what abuse is. No one talks about it in Irish society. More people need to know what abuse in the home looks like and learn how to talk to each other about it.
- Make better supports available in places like schools and clubs so that you can tell someone if you are being abused.

Physical Punishment

- Physical punishment should be banned for all ages.
- Parents should be taught alternatives to physical punishments.

Health Resources

- Provide more resources for us in hospitals.
- Promote healthy eating and fitness.

Mind and Body Spotlight Issue: Bullying, Mental Health and Stress

- Schools need to teach us how to look after our mental health, including stress calming techniques, coping skills, and warning signs.
- Provide services for us when we can't cope.

Mind and Body: Stats and Explainers

- Primary School is for children aged between 5 and 11.
- Secondary School is for children aged between 11 and 18.
- Garda/Gardaí is the Irish for police officer/police force.
- According to the Child and Family Agency, there are 6,454 children living in state care, 6,001 of which live in a foster care. (tusla.ie)

Living Together

Making sure we're treated as equal

We are all equal because we are all human. We are not born racist; this is the beauty of being a child. As we get older, and see how adults treat people unequally, we learn to be racist, to stereotype, and to identify on the grounds of difference. We know we are always going to be different, and together we want to learn and teach each other to value our differences. Equality is important to us because it affects our future. The way we are treated affects the way we will treat others. It is not just people who treat each other different, it is also the government. This means if you are different, you don't have the same opportunities. We want to make sure all children in Ireland reach their full potential. Every person should feel welcome in the world.

"I feel safest on the pitch."

Student from Dalkey School Project National School, Dublin.

“There is gender discrimination; boys are meant to be macho and tough, like football and everything.”

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey.

“I worry for my parents as money is tight and I see them giving to us and going without even down to food. They make light of it.”

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey.

“We have no proper internet because we live in the country.”

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey.

“If I were in charge for the day I would try to get people who live on the streets into a home; I would try to feed people who are hungry.”

Child from National Parents Council Primary Survey.

@THEPENGUIN143 #Inequality

@chelsea1234ea #CostOfCollege



“PE uniforms cost €60 and if you come into school without it, or if it is incomplete, you have to run laps, do lines, or can even be sent home. I’m too embarrassed to say to school we can’t afford it.”

Participant from Future Voices, Dublin.

“Many children can’t afford third level education.”

Student from Our Lady’s Bower, Athlone.

“If you look at most Traveller’s sites they’re always built beside motor ways, and beside dumps, and that is how you get sick. These instances have led to a lot of mental health issues too, and a lot of suicides, one in seven Travellers committing suicide.”

Participant from Traveller Focus Group, Dublin.

@Max Goldman #MentalHealth #Suicide

“Ireland could be something really big, and change the world, and be a role model for other countries, if they just follow the rights of people, and give them their rights.”

Focus Group, Athlone.



“If you’re going to get hopped, you wouldn’t take out your phone and ring the guards.”

Participant from Teen Focus Group, Clondalkin.

@Fruitjuice #Poverty



@EstherKeenan #EarlyYears

@paddycollins62 #BeingMe



“When I am talking and my brother talks my mammy says ‘Let Cormac talk.’ I feel happy.”

Child from Little Rascals Tullyallen, Louth.

“Everyone should have a chance to go to school and college and get a good job.”

Student from Arklow Christian Brothers Secondary School, Wicklow.

@Ryanoshea_xo #DisabilityRights

@FocusIrelandFinglas #EqualRights



"People with disabilities aren't always treated with the respect and care they deserve. Classes need to be more integrated for those with disabilities, rather than isolating them."

Student from Presentation College, Tuam.

"Make travel, activities and sports like horse riding more accessible for lower income families."

Participants from Focus Ireland Aylward Green, Finglas.

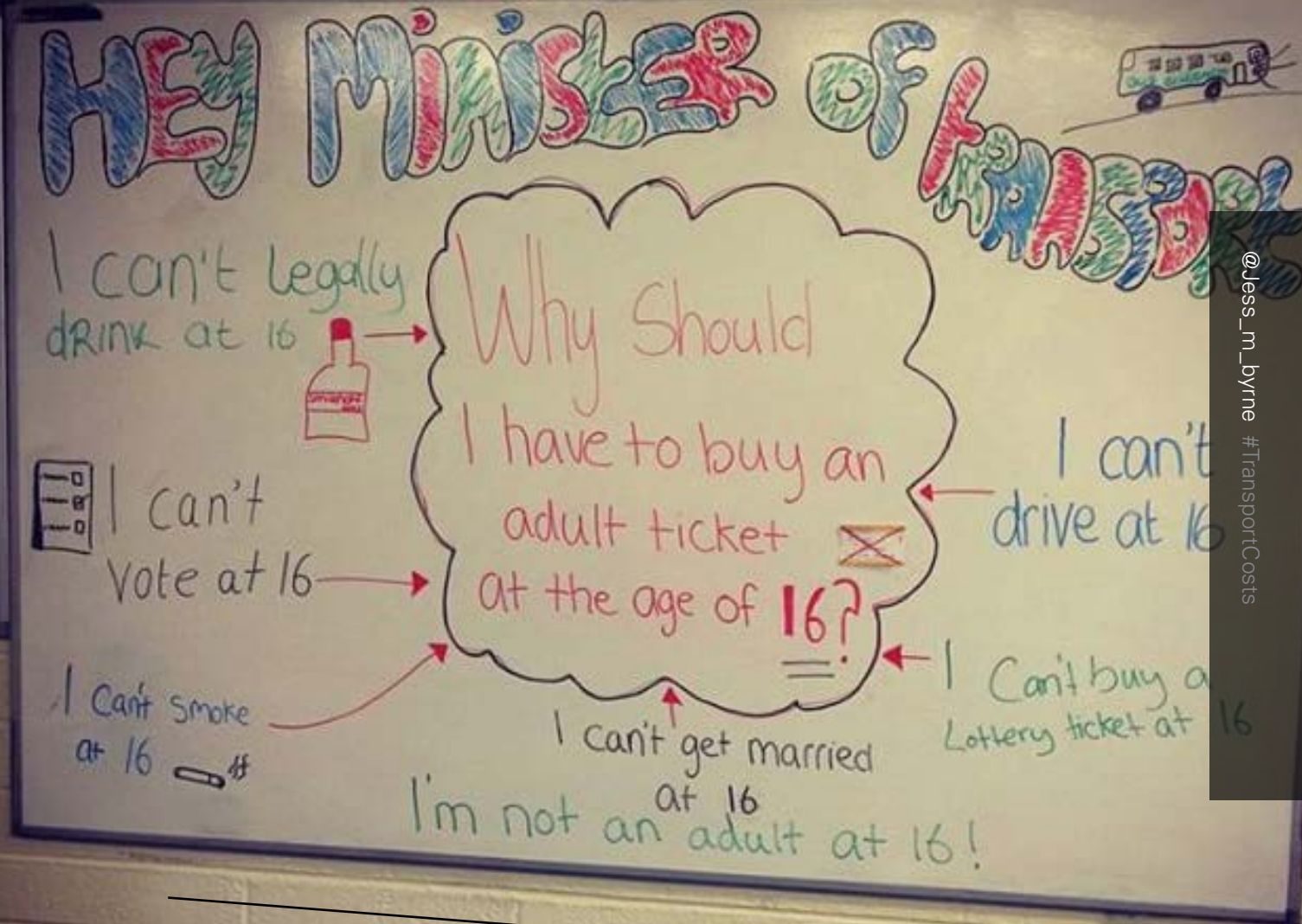


"School is very expensive because there are so many fees, such as uniforms, copies, stationary, trips, transition year fees."

Participant from Children's Advisory Committee ISPC, Monaghan.

"We must accept people, regardless of their gender, identity, culture, and age."

Participant from Children's Advisory Committee ISPC, Dublin.



"Why should I have to buy an adult ticket at the age of 16?"

Student from St. Aloysius' College Carrigwohill, Cork.



Spotlight issue:

Direct Provision

Students living in Direct Provision (aged 13), Athlone, Westmeath.

Interview recorded on 12th February 2015.

The government hides it so well that people don't know. It's such a tragic form of a life. We don't get new toothbrushes or linen or soap. **We want to stand on our own two feet. We want a better life, not a worse one.** Ask the Minister to try live where we live and see if she survives for a week. **It's not good enough.** Would she like her family to be in that situation? Why don't we deserve the same as her children? The fear alone does not let you sleep. **Ireland is not living up to its commitments - our rights and needs are not being met. They don't care about our needs.** We are treated like animals. When we protested the staff at the centre treated us worse. **We are not treated with any dignity or respect.** They think we're a burden. After 14 years, you've nothing left where you came from. Everyday a bit of our past is being rubbed out. We're not cats. We don't have 9 lives and we cannot keep adjusting to changes. **All I want is the protection of the country.** I want to help the world be a better world. Happiness is what you want for everyone. **No matter how much of an optimist you are, there is no good from Direct Provision.**



@Natasha #NotGoodEnough

“Try living where we live, in the same state we live and survive for at least a week. It’s not good enough. I’d like to ask the Minister would she want this for her own children.”

Participant from Direct Provision Focus Group, Athlone.

@thewronggirl #WhyMe?

@sandcastkeday #Invisible



“If children aren’t treated well now, in the future they are not going to be happy in their life.”

Participant from Direct Provision Focus Group, Athlone.

“What they are doing is controlling our future and they don’t have a right to do that.”

Participant from Direct Provision Focus Group, Athlone.

“People don’t know where we live, they don’t see the places where we live, so I think we have been hidden.”

Participant from Direct Provision Focus Group, Athlone.



@thewronggirl #WeDeserveBetter

Living Together: Action Points

Discrimination

- Support us to celebrate our differences.
- Do more to stop discrimination.
- Do more to bring communities together.

Equality

- Make sure we are not living in poverty and have access to proper homes and services.
- Make school more affordable for all families, and fund transition year for all schools.
- Provide less expensive activities in our communities.

Living Together Spotlight Issue: Direct Provision

- End Direct Provision and provide us with a just and fair standard of living.
- Decide on our status sooner and keep us informed.
- Allow us to stay in education up to third level.

Living Together: Stats and Explainers

- Travellers are an indigenous minority with a distinct nomadic culture.
- Direct Provision is Ireland's system of providing the basic needs of food and shelter for asylum seekers.
- PE is physical education.
- There were 411 families in homeless accommodation with 911 children, in the capital during the week of March 23-29, 2015. (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2015).
- There are 14,913 Traveller children in Ireland (Census 2011).



Our Future

Planning for the world to come

We want a future we can look forward to, a future that gives us the skills, opportunities and resources to thrive. It is our right to inherit a healthy planet; this needs planning and requires people to make responsible decisions today. We also have a right to an education that helps us care for ourselves and the world. Our views and opinions need to be heard and we need to have more of a say in the decisions and choices that are affecting our future.

“Teach us how to change the world for the better, every child needs to take CSPE.”

Participant from ECO-UNESCO, Dublin.



@lobhar Stokes #OurSkills

“Our future is in danger, due to lack of employment, and the points system being unfair. We may be unable to bring our qualifications abroad, and adults have the input where young people should vote.”

Participant from Comhairle na nÓg, Roscommon.

@IANW109 #CitizensRights

@MellaMay #LookingAtMyFuture

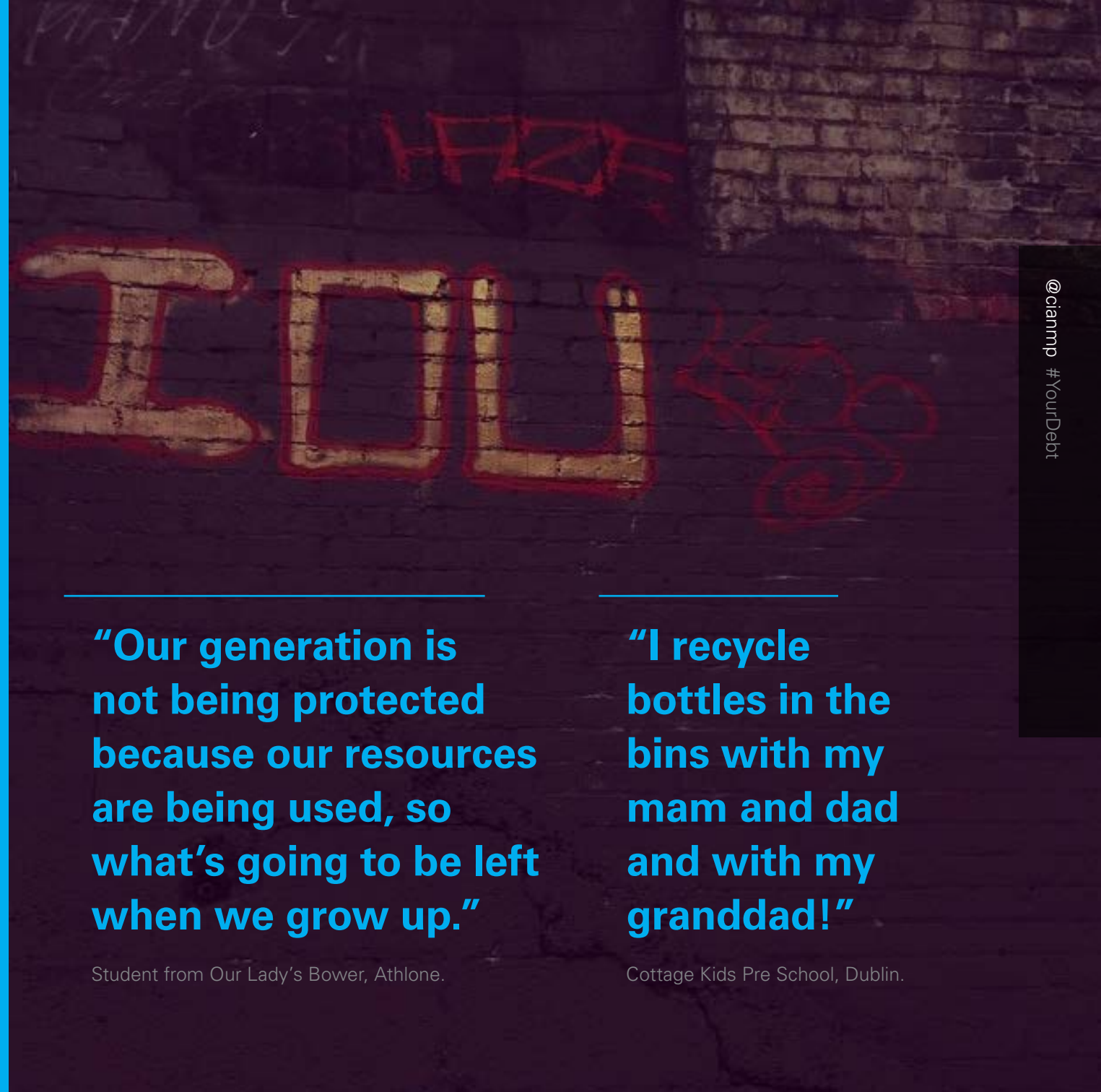


“Why is learning about our rights and how to be an active citizen going to be optional? Young people have a right to participate in a democracy and that includes being informed.”

Student from Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin.

“To protect our future Ireland needs to make sure the climate doesn’t grow.”

Student from Dalkey School Project National School, Dublin.



@ciamp #YourDebt

“Our generation is not being protected because our resources are being used, so what’s going to be left when we grow up.”

Student from Our Lady’s Bower, Athlone.

“I recycle bottles in the bins with my mam and dad and with my granddad!”

Cottage Kids Pre School, Dublin.

@Ecounesco #Environment

@kirsty_hayes #LeavingCert



"Adults both parents and teachers, need to be teaching children about the negative effects of climate change and how they can reduce the impact they are having on the planet."

Student from Presentation College, Tuam.

"Creativity and problem solving need to be cherished and encouraged in our education system instead of teaching us how to just memorise information for an exam."

Anna Golden TY Student, Galway.

"Teachers are striking the reform of the Junior Cert, but who asked the people sitting the exam what we think."

Anna Golden TY Student, Galway.



@StAIsCarraig #Where'sOurVoice

“We have the right to a safe and clean world.”

Student from Our Lady’s Bower, Athlone.

@Molly_giles17 #MyFuture

@LaurenBoyle #CoolKidsStudio



“Points system of the Leaving Cert limits options. It’s also daunting to be locked in.”

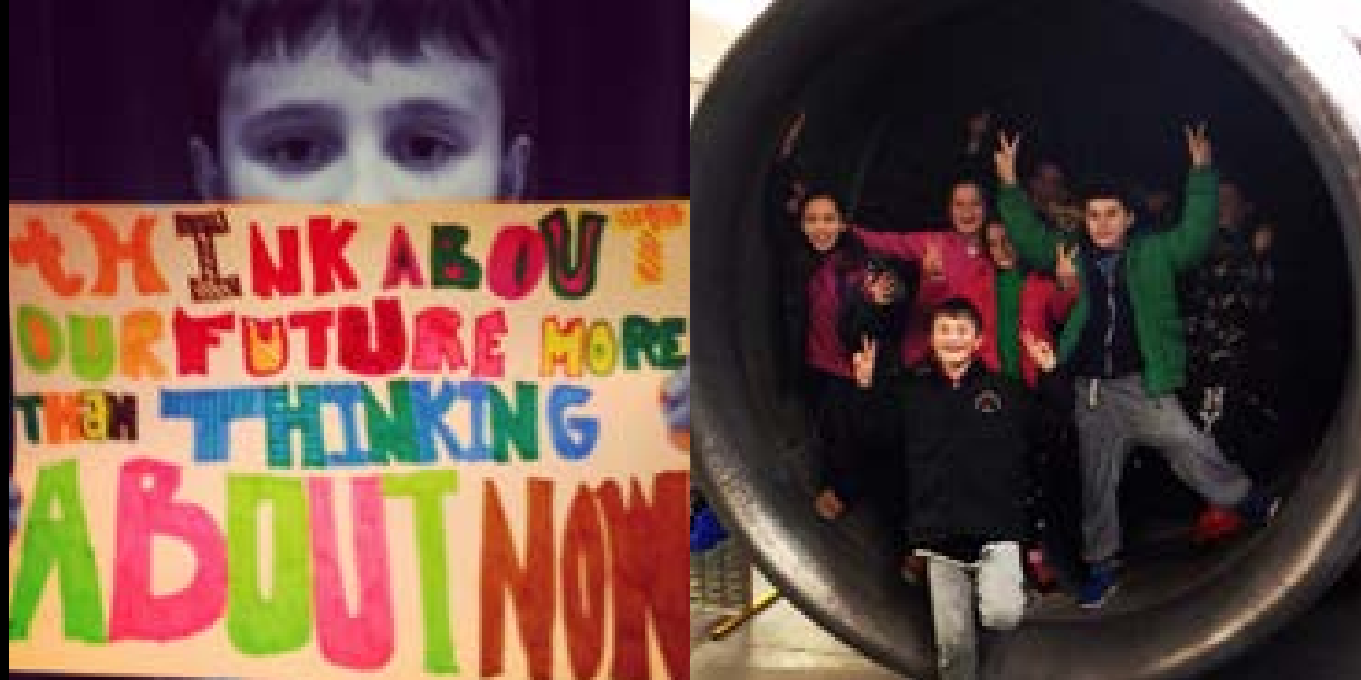
Participant from Children’s Advisory Committee ISPCC, Mayo.

“We feel the following subjects should be taught in schools - water safety, mythology, self defence, interview prep, life skills, like paying bills, budgeting, changing a tire, drivers education, mindfulness and art classes.”

Participant from Children’s Advisory Committee ISPCC, Mayo.

@GavinMacA #MyFutureRights

@HARRY_21_69 #FutureLearning

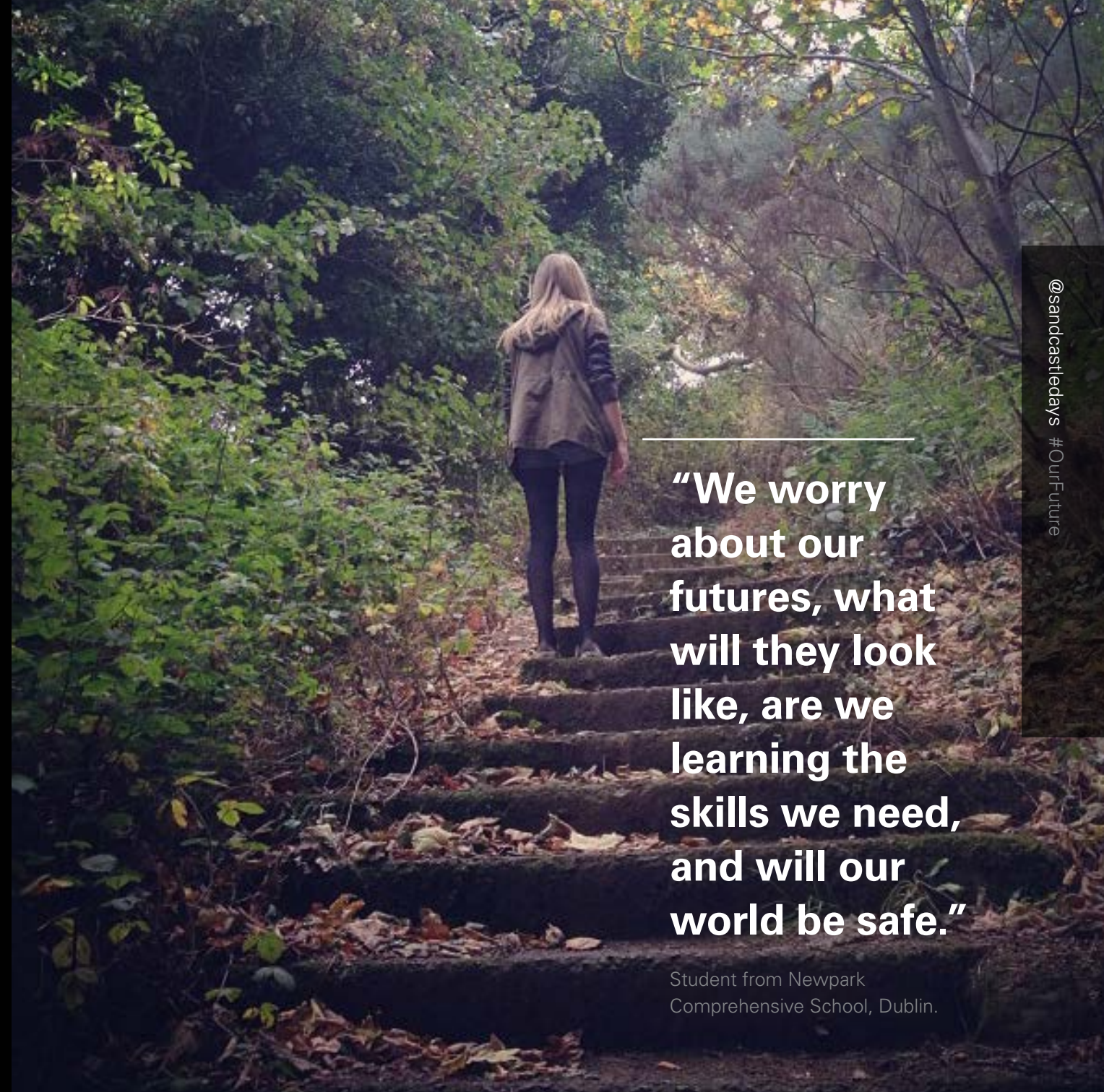


"We feel that the environment has been treated very badly and we will be expected to fix it in the future."

Participant from Children's Advisory Committee ISPC, Monaghan.

"We need to be taught more streetwise skills not just purely academic subjects."

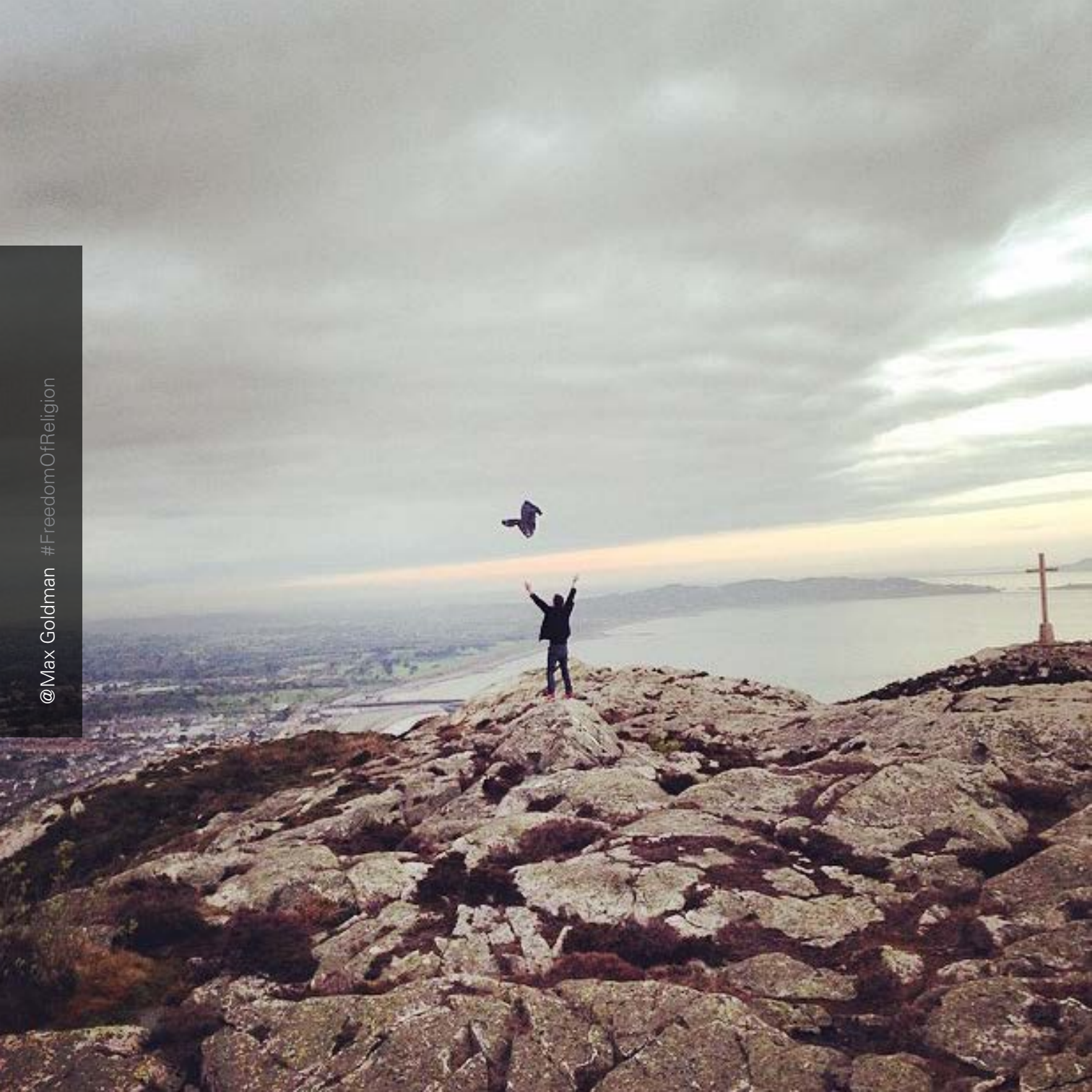
Participant From Children's Advisory Committee ISPC, Mayo.



@sandcastledays #OurFuture

"We worry about our futures, what will they look like, are we learning the skills we need, and will our world be safe."

Student from Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin.



@Max Goldman #FreedomOfReligion

Spotlight issue:

Religion in school

Kirsty Hayes; Focus Group Leader (ages 14-16), Clonakilty, Cork.

Interview recorded on 24th March 2015.

Religion is a choice in life so should not be forced. It's a waste of time to teach people something they are not interested in. To be fair I don't think anybody in our class has any interest in religion. **In our school we don't even do religion; we just get a lot of essays for misbehaving.** Also, they only really focus on like one certain religion of the school; I think it should be more of a broad thing like learning about different religions, if it is going to be taught at all. **We should be trying to understand everybody's beliefs and not just saying 'we're all Christian'.** It's like our religion book; the whole book is Catholic with just like five pages for just all the other religions of the world. **Not everybody believes the same things the school does.** The religion teacher is always bias of the religion. Like everywhere there are like statues and pictures and holy water fonts and like that's fine but there is no other choice really. If I'm asked in class you know 'What are your views in life?' and I say what the teacher doesn't like, she just keeps asking me until she gets the answer she wants. **She's like, 'You were baptised weren't you?' - I'm like, 'No!' - and she is like, 'but you were, right?'**

“Ireland would be a fairer place if schools would accept everyone, not just people with a certain religion.”

Students from Dalkey School Project National School, Dublin.

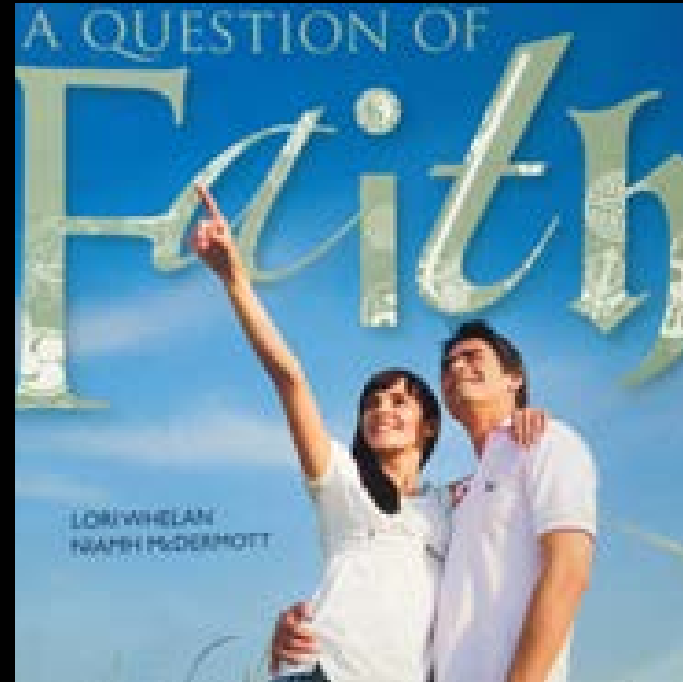




“I go to a Catholic School and the children of other religions and no religion have to go to religion class where they learn about the Catholic faith.”

Participant from Future Voices, Dublin.

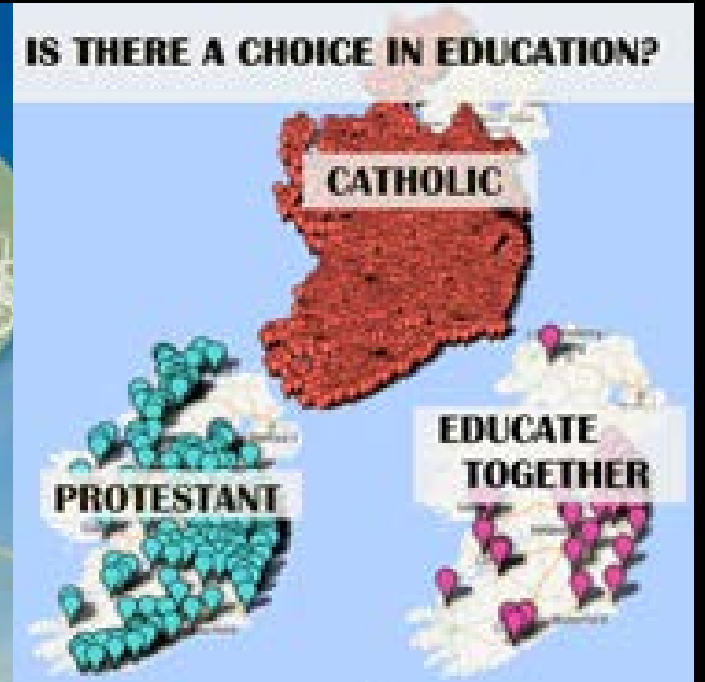
@cianmp #HolyTextBooks



“Why is this my textbook? School is for facts, church is for faith. I want to learn facts not what others believe.”

Student from Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin.

@cianmp #ChoiceInEducation



“There is only a real choice if you are Catholic. 96% of primary schools are run by religious patronage, 90% are Catholic.”

Student from Newpark Comprehensive School, Dublin.

Our Future: Action Points

Education Reforms

- Consult with us about changing the education system.
- Offer us more subject choices in school.
- Change the Leaving Cert Points System and make it fairer by taking into account our different skills and interests and make it more practical.
- Make university more affordable and accessible.
- Make the cost of secondary and primary school more affordable, through reduced costs for books, school trips and transition year.
- Teach us about our rights in primary and secondary school, not just in CSPE.

Our Environment

- Teach us more about the importance of the environment and sustainable development in schools.
- Protect our future by protecting the environment and addressing climate change.

Our Future Spotlight Issue: Religion in School

- Schools must ensure that different cultures are celebrated.
- Schools should not favour students of one religion over another.
- Religion in school should be an optional subject.
- Make sure there is a real choice in attending religious schools.

Our Future: Stats and Explainers

- CSPE is Civic, Social and Political Education, a course delivered to 12-14 year olds in secondary school.
- The Junior Certificate is an exam qualification awarded by the state to students who have successfully completed the junior cycle first three years of secondary education.
- The Leaving Certificate Exam commonly referred to as the Leaving Cert is the final examination in the Irish secondary school system.

Acknowledgements

The Children's Rights Alliance and UNICEF Ireland would like to acknowledge all those who contributed their time, energy and enthusiasm to this report. In total there were over 250 submissions were received, 2090 young people were surveyed online, 500 students took part in discussions and 10 youth focus groups reports submitted.

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- Amy Shields • Andrius Sirvys • Ashleigh Kiernan
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- Minahil Sarfraz • Natasha Maimba
- Nathan McDonagh • Paddy Collins
- Philip Manifold • Ryan Collins
- Sasanga Ilapperuma.

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- 1st & 3rd Years, Presentation Tuam
- 1st, 2nd & 5th Year, Our Lady's Bower, Athlone
- 2nd & 5th Years, Arklow CBS
- 4th Class, Garretstown
- 6th Class, Greystones Educate Together
- St. Aloysius' College Carrigtwohill, Cork
- Amnesty Group, Newpark Comprehensive School.

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- Respecting Teens Focus Group • the Direct Provision Focus Group • the Traveller Focus Group
- the Religion in Education Focus Group and
- the Mental Health & Stress Focus Group.

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- Beverton Preschool, Donabate, Co. Dublin
- Bizzy Bees Preschool, Loughskinny, Co. Dublin
- Little Rascals Montessori, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway
- Kiddies World Preschool, Gormanston, Co. Meath
- Magic Steps Childcare, Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath
- The Cottage Kids Playschool, Lusk, Co. Dublin
- St. Finian's Childcare, Lucan, Co. Dublin
- Barnardos Cork
- Barnardos Dublin.

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- Barnardos
- BeLonG To
- Bradog Youth Group
- Children's Hospitals, Youth Advisory Panel
- Comhairle na nÓg
- Early Childhood Ireland
- ECO UNESCO
- Focus Ireland (particularly the Children's Centre and Long Term Accommodation)
- Foroige
- ISPCC
- EPIC
- Future Voices
- Irish Refugee Council
- Lifestart
- Pavee Point
- Startstrong
- Tipperary Regional Youth Service
- Youth Work Ireland.

Children's Rights Alliance Member List

- Ag Eisteacht
- Alcohol Action Ireland
- Alliance Against Cutbacks in Education
- Amnesty International Ireland
- Arc Adoption
- The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children
- ASH Ireland
- Assoc. for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD)
- Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
- ATD Fourth World – Ireland Ltd
- Atheist Ireland
- Barnardos
- Barretstown Camp
- BeLonG To Youth Services
- Bessborough Centre
- Border Counties Childhood Network
- Carr's Child and Family Services
- Catholic Guides of Ireland
- Childhood Development Initiative
- Children in Hospital Ireland
- City of Dublin YMCA
- COPE Galway
- Cork Life Centre
- Crosscare
- Dental Health Foundation
- DIT – School of Social Sciences & Legal Studies
- Down Syndrome Ireland
- Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
- Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project
- Early Childhood Ireland
- Educate Together
- School of Education UCD
- EPIC
- Focus Ireland
- Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta
- Foróige
- GLEN - Gay and Lesbian Equality Network
- Headstrong - The National Centre for Youth Mental Health
- Healthy Food for All
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Inclusion Ireland
- Independent Hospitals Association of Ireland
- Inspire Ireland
- Institute of Community Health Nursing
- Institute of Guidance Counsellors
- International Adoption Association
- Irish Association of Social Care Workers (IASCW)
- Irish Association of Social Workers
- Irish Association of Suicidology
- Irish Autism Action
- Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
- Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
- Irish Foster Care Association
- Irish Girl Guides
- Irish Heart Foundation
- Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Premature Babies
- Irish Primary Principals Network
- Irish Refugee Council
- Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU)
- Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Irish Youth Foundation (IYF)
- Jack & Jill Children's Foundation
- Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
- Junglebox Childcare Centre F.D.Y.S.
- Kids' Own Publishing Partnership
- Law Centre for Children and Young People
- Lifestart National Office
- Marriage Equality – Civil Marriage for Gay and Lesbian People
- Mary Immaculate College
- Mental Health Reform
- Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth and Family Project
- MyMind
- National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA)
- National Parents Council Post Primary
- National Parents Council Primary
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- One Family
- One in Four
- Parentline
- Parentstop
- Pavee Point
- Peter McVerry Trust
- Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
- Realt Beag
- SAFE Ireland
- Saoirse Housing Association
- SAOL Beag Children's Centre
- Scouting Ireland
- Simon Communities of Ireland
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul
- Sonas Housing Association
- Special Needs Parents Association
- SpunOut.ie
- St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers Association
- St. Nicholas Montessori Society
- St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
- Start Strong
- Step by Step Child & Family Project
- Sugradh
- The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
- The Guardian Children's Project
- The Prevention and Early Intervention Network
- Treoir
- UNICEF Ireland
- Unmarried and Separated Families of Ireland
- youngballymun
- Youth Advocate Programme Ireland (YAP)
- Youth Work Ireland

"States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

My notes:

@Max Goldman #MakeThisCount

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