

Children's Rights Alliance

Initiatives and Activities *2002-2003*

Purpose:

To secure the implementation in Ireland of the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Initiatives and Activities:

1. Promote compliance with the commitments and goals of the National Children's Strategy.

- Promote action on the full body of commitments and goals detailed in the Strategy
- Monitor compliance with timetables and action plans set forth in the Strategy
- Promote action on all of the Strategy's structural commitments, including the development and use of well-being indicators, child impact statements and mechanisms to enable children's views to be heard in relation to decisions that affect them
- Seek the development of action plans by the National Children's Office for those goals and commitments not accompanied by specific timetables for action
- Collaborate and cooperate with all statutory bodies, NGOs and others working to ensure that the potential of the National Children's Strategy to meet children's needs and safeguard their rights is fully realised
- Continue to consult regularly with the Minister for Children, the Director of the National Children's Office, and all other officials and staff charged with responsibilities to develop and implement the Strategy at national, regional and local levels
- Publish a Progress Report on the implementation of the Strategy
- Make public statements in relation to progress in implementing the Strategy
- Participate actively in the National Children's Advisory Council and promote its functions, including monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Strategy; undertaking and advising on research, including the development of well-being indicators; advising on training; advising on the development of mechanisms to consult with children; advising on improved coordination and delivery of services

to children; and advising the Minister for Children on all aspects of children's lives

2. Enable Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children to be a strong, independent and effective champion of children and their rights.

- Continue to advocate for the Ombudsman to be appointed through an open, transparent and consultative process that involves children and the children's NGO sector
- Promote the adequate resourcing of the Office of Ombudsman for Children
- Undertake a review of independent children's rights institutions in other jurisdictions to identify accomplishments and best practices relevant to children in Ireland
- Use this review to suggest initial agenda items for the Ombudsman for Children to consider addressing after taking office
- Continue to work closely with Children's Commissioner advocates in Northern Ireland to ensure that the strongest possible rights protection be afforded to all children in Ireland, North and South, consistent with the rights and equality principles enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement

3. Advance the effort to eliminate child poverty in Ireland.

- Carry out the Alliance's work programme as a National Anti-Poverty Network
- Establish and launch the *End Child Poverty Coalition* as a successor partnership to the *Open Your Eyes to Child Poverty Initiative*
- Promote awareness and implementation of the commitment in the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy to end child poverty by the target date of 2007
- Promote implementation of the National Children's Strategy commitment, "*Children will be provided the financial supports necessary to eliminate child poverty*"
- Publish and distribute proceedings of the "Ending Child Poverty: Making the Commitment Real" conference
- Act as a catalyst and resource for anti-poverty work among member organisations in accordance with Alliance's responsibilities as a designated National Anti-Poverty Network
- Assist in developing the capacity of children and young people experiencing poverty to represent themselves at policy levels
- Publish pre-budget submissions on behalf of the *Coalition*
- Promote the extension of the Medical Card to all children

4. Enable children's views to be heard in relation to issues that affect them.

- Launch and distribute *Hearing Young Voices* research study on children's participation in decision making and on models for meaningful consultation with children

- Develop and distribute resource materials and guidelines for NGOs, including small organisations, for promoting participation by children
- Promote the development of children's participation training materials for policy makers whose decisions have a significant impact upon the lives of children and young people
- Promote the training of professionals and statutory staff who work with children to develop a deeper understanding of children's rights and a greater capacity to consult with children regarding matters that affect them

5. Promote awareness and understanding of the Convention and training in children's rights for relevant statutory personnel.

- Develop the Children's Rights Information Centre portion of the Alliance's website
- Launch the Alliance's website, www.childrensrights.ie
- Hold workshops and seminars on children's rights
- Disseminate information and printed materials on children's rights and the UN Convention
- Ensure awareness raising efforts are targeted appropriately to reach children and young people; policymakers; professionals and statutory staff who work with children and young people; parents and other adults
- Develop a plan and timetable for action in relation to children's rights training for statutory personnel who work with or in connection with children
- Conduct second phase of awareness raising campaign on children's rights and the UN Convention

6. Prepare the Alliance's Second Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

- Offer to consult with Government in relation to preparation of the Second National Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Design timetable and framework for internal consultation with membership of the Alliance in relation to both the Government's and the Alliance's reports to the Committee
- Establish Alliance working committees to assist with the drafting of the Alliance report
- Consult with membership of the Alliance to identify and prioritise substantive issues relating to the implementation of the Convention
- Examine Ireland's compliance with the Committee's *Concluding Observations*
- Circulate draft Alliance report to membership for approval
- Publish and submit the Alliance's report following publication and submission of the Government's Second National Report

- 7. Incorporate into Irish law the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.**
 - Responding to the request of the Minister for Children, submit proposals for incorporating the Convention into Irish law
 - Hold conference to focus attention on the proposals and on their importance
 - Use the impending incorporation into Irish law of the European Convention on Human Rights to build support for incorporation of the UN Convention

- 8. Protect the rights of children in the care and juvenile justice systems.**
 - Promote adoption of the comprehensive package of children's rights recommendations put forward by the Alliance and submitted to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Degrading or Inhuman Treatment or Punishment during the Committee's May 2002 visit to Ireland
 - Continue to oppose the opening of the new children's prison wing
 - Support the accelerated introduction of those sections of the Children Act, 2001 not yet in force

- 9. Protect and promote children's rights as opportunities and challenges arise.**
 - Submit policy proposals to statutory bodies on matters relating to children's rights and needs
 - Accept invitations to participate in advisory bodies or in consultations with statutory bodies on matters relating to children's rights and needs
 - Correspond with public officials in support of children's rights
 - Issue public statements in response to threats to children's rights
 - Support the rights of all children, including children with disabilities, Traveller children and Irish-born children of non-nationals
 - Collaborate with the Human Rights Commission on children's rights

- 10. Develop and strengthen the Alliance.**
 - Involve membership in Alliance initiatives and campaigns
 - Consult membership in relation to the Alliance's Strategic Plan, pre-budget submission and policy submissions
 - Develop a new three-year Strategic Plan for the Alliance
 - Increase membership in preparation for the Alliance's report and presentation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in relation to Ireland's performance in implementing the Convention
 - Expand Alliance capacity to make policy submissions and interventions, to respond promptly to children's rights issues as they arise and to conduct multiple, simultaneous campaigns
 - Secure additional core and project funding to enable the Alliance to undertake its planned initiatives and activities