

Children's Rights Now

CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS
ALLIANCE
Uniting Voices For Children

NEWSLETTER 2023 ISSUE 2



Dear Members and Alliance friends,

This edition of the newsletter includes some significant impacts and updates following the first one issued earlier this year. It was fantastic to have the opportunity to meet with the Taoiseach and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth earlier in the year on the proposed new Child Poverty and Wellbeing Unit. It is great to see the momentum building behind what is a potential gamechanger when it comes to our long-term objective of ending child poverty. In recent months, the Taoiseach has brought a memo to Cabinet outlining the makeup and the priorities for the Unit. The choice of Principal Officer to head up the Unit and the proposed six-member team for the office demonstrates how high a priority this work is for the Government. We look forward to working with the team and

Department leads as they develop the new programme of work for the unit. There is also momentum in other parts of Government to address child poverty. Minister Humphreys announced the expansion of the Hot School Meals Scheme to DEIS and special schools from this year, which will benefit up to 16,000 additional primary school pupils. In addition, she has set out a long term plan for providing all children with hot school meals by 2030.

In April, we held a series of online consultations on behalf of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the development of a new Equal Participation Model for early years. We know how critical early intervention is to break the cycle of poverty as early as possible in a child's life. The new model aims to develop a system where all children, but particularly those experiencing the highest levels of deprivation, have equal access to quality early childhood care and education services and the supports they need in order to participate (similar to a DEIS model for Early Years). Thank you for your support in circulating the opportunity with your networks. The consultations, along with an online survey, collated the views of over 200 parents, particularly those experiencing marginalisation, migrant and refugee parents, one-parent families, and parents from Traveller and Roma communities. This consultation will help shape the new model to best meet the needs of the families it aims to support.

We were delighted to hold our first in-person Tusla dialogue in May, with new interim Chief Executive Officer Kate Duggan. The dialogue with Tusla has gone from strength to strength since our first meeting in 2020. The Dialogue has been a hugely important and constructive way for us and members to raise and discuss key issues arising for children and young people in a facilitated discussion with senior management in Tusla. At this first in-person meeting, we discussed pressing issues including the Tusla Reform Programme, children in care, residential services, after-care and educational support services.

We built on our work with Tusla to hold our first dialogue with the [Health Service Executive \(HSE\)](#) and CEO, Bernard Gloster. This new dialogue is a unique opportunity for members to engage with the HSE on the pressing issues for children, including support for children in care and mental health services for children and young people. I have no doubt that it will enhance communication and information exchange, as well as fostering a long-term relationship with a key stakeholder to the Alliance, our members and our wider network.

This newsletter shares other important updates over the past two months and also includes important information about what is to come. We have several exciting member opportunities in June with our End Child Poverty campaign work and our Annual AGM and members' event which will focus on the future of education. We are also organising several members' briefings in the coming months so I would encourage you to sign up to our email updates and follow us online for the latest details.

To our members and friends, thank you, as always, for your continued and greatly valued support.



Tanya Ward
Chief Executive



1. Fostering Children's Rights

Children's Rights Alliance Helpline



Children's Rights Alliance Helpline

01 902 0494

Mondays 10am – 4pm
Wednesdays 10am – 4pm
Fridays 10am – 12 noon

The graphic includes a yellow clock face and a blue sign that says 'OPEN'.

Our Helpline and Legal Advice Clinics provide legal information specifically on children's rights and **free one to one legal advice**. In addition to the contact details above, you can email the helpline team *anytime* at help@childrensrights.ie

Know Your Rights

In April, we held our first Know Your Rights Conference focusing on human rights remedies for children, young people and their families. The event was attended by public sector and community sector staff and involved inputs from the Ombudsman for Children's Office, Garda Síochána, Ombudsman Commission, Office of the Information Commissioner, Data Protection Commission, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Public Interest Law Alliance and Bar of Ireland Voluntary Assistance Scheme. The event also included keynote speeches from the **Special Rapporteur for Child Protection, Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC** and **Judy Walsh, UCD School of Social Justice**.



2. Children's Rights in Law, Policies and Practice

Early Years

The Children's Rights Alliance is part of a campaign co-led by [Eurochild](#) on Early Childhood Development. The campaign advocates for the prioritisation of early childhood development in public policies, with a particular focus on families and children who are at greater risk of discrimination and exclusion. As part of this campaign, the Alliance has commissioned the Early Childhood Research Centre at Dublin City University to undertake research on the development of a public model of childcare in Ireland. We have recently established an advisory group including, Respond!, SIPTU, Daughters of Charity, Gaeloideachas, Barnardos, Early Childhood Ireland and the National Parents Council, to oversee this research. For more information on this work, contact [Naomi](#).

Children's Mental Health Services

The mental health service for children and adolescents, CAMHS, provides specialist mental health support for young people in Ireland. The Health Services Executive is working to build a better youth mental health service for Ireland that can meet young people's mental health needs more effectively. As part of this, The Children's Rights Alliance ran a series of consultations and an online survey at the end of May on behalf of the HSE Mental Health Engagement and Recovery Office to collect the views of parents. The feedback that comes as a result will inform the work of the national group on CAMHS engagement.

Ukraine Briefings

The Children's Rights Alliance sits on the Ukraine Civil Society Forum. In February, we held a cluster meeting on Education, Youth and Children as part of this work. Our continuing focus are: safeguarding and child protection, language acquisition and integration in the school setting. Following commissioned research into the educational needs of children arriving from Ukraine, we will hold a briefing the Department of Education on 28 June online from 11am -12.30pm. If you would like to attend or hear more about this work, please contact [Karla](#).

3. Understanding the Impact of Covid-19

Building Children's Futures - Using Children's Rights to Recover from the Global Pandemic

The 'Building Children's Futures' project, funded by the European Commission, examines the effect of pandemic public health measures on services for children and young people, with a particular focus on groups of children who were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The project is led by the Children's Rights Alliance, with partners Foróige and the University of Galway. The project is well underway, with a youth advisory committee now established that includes representative voices from specific groups of children disproportionately impacted during Covid-19. Over the past two months, the nine youth researchers have been meeting and preparing for high-level interviews which will inform the final report. The research will make recommendations on how children's rights can be protected in times of emergency. The project is developing ways to mainstream and embed children's rights in emergency situations by developing Child Right Impact Assessments (CRIAs), with the support of the Child and Young People Services Committee (CYPSCs), who will lead this work. In the coming months the Alliance will be engaging in research in best practice on the use of CRIAs and the development of a toolkit.

4. Poverty and Social Exclusion

Child Poverty and Wellbeing Unit

The Government's Child Poverty and Wellbeing Unit has been established and Anna Visser was appointed to lead the team of six at the Department of Taoiseach. The unit, a long-campaigned for intervention by the Alliance and our members, has the potential to be a gamechanger that can turn the tide of child poverty. Addressing child poverty is also a key goal for the Government in the second part of its Programme for Government and it will be a centre piece to Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, which is currently being finalised by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Child Poverty Monitor

The Alliance launched its second Child Poverty Monitor in June 2023 which examines child poverty issues in Ireland, makes recommendations and showcases best practice solutions. The Child Poverty Monitor provides a unique analysis of the issue of poverty through a children's rights lens. It focuses on the issue and provides a context across eight key policy areas - income adequacy, food poverty, early childhood education and care, education, health, housing and homelessness, participation, play, culture and recreation and supporting families and youth services. Through this analysis the monitor identifies what each government department can do in Budget 2024 and in the medium to long term to reduce and ultimately end child poverty. With 236,910 children and young people experiencing enforced deprivation, we are calling on Government to make the right choice now by making Budget 2024 a Children's Budget. Key recommendations include; the need to allocate sufficient funding in Budget 2024 to support the implementation of the first phase of the new Equal Participation Model in early years with a focus on wraparound services, provision of food and parental support; the need to expand the Home School Community Liaison programme to non-DEIS schools on a phased basis; and to increase the rate of Qualified Child Increase paid to families with children in receipt of social welfare.

This year's edition of the Monitor highlights eight spotlight solutions including the work of the Early Learning Initiative based in Dublin but with a nationwide reach and Let's Grow Together in Cork City Northwest area, who provide supports for children and their families in their early years; Helium arts who provide access to the arts and culture for children with lifelong health conditions and Focus Ireland who provide supports for children and families living in emergency accommodation.

We launched the Monitor in Rutland National School in Dublin 1 which has benefited from some key investments from government through the City Connects initiative because of the high level of deprivation in the area and an ongoing feud between criminal gangs. The school was newly developed with green and play spaces nearby. The staff also run innovative wellbeing initiatives for the students including a Nurture Room and a psychologist works with the students.

Read the 2023 Child Poverty Monitor [here](#).

Watch our launch event back [here](#).





Hot School Meals

In March, the Department of Social Protection published the [Evaluation Report of the School Meals Scheme](#). The expansion of the Hot School Meals Scheme plays an important role in reducing the level of food poverty among children and young people. For many children, the meal they get in school may be the only hot meal they get that day. For other families, the benefits are felt beyond the school as it eases the financial burden that weighs down on parents, particularly in the cost-of-living crisis. The expansion will happen on a phased basis with DEIS schools and special schools prioritised initially. We welcome the Minister for Social Protection's firm commitment to the full expansion of the programme by 2030, ensuring that every child gets at least one hot, nutritious meal.

Read the Children's Rights Alliance press release on the evaluation report [here](#).

Holiday Hunger Scheme

We have launched a Holiday Hunger Food Provision Scheme that enables us to support four member organisations across Ireland including Extern Ireland, CDI, Crosscare and Doras. Funding from Enterprise Rent a Car will facilitate the distribution of food hampers/meals to families for four weeks during the summer when schools are closed. The Holiday Hunger Scheme allows us to provide much needed help to fill the support gap that arises at the closure of schools over the summer period, a primary concern of the Alliance. We would like to thank our funders who have worked with us both currently and previously over the Winter to secure vital funding to support thousands of children and young people over the holidays.

A New Equal Participation Model

In April, we ran a series of consultations on behalf of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the development of a new Equal Participation Model. The new model aims to promote equal participation and access for all children to early learning and care and school aged childcare services. Access to these services plays a critically important role in breaking the cycle of poverty as early as possible in a child's life. Yet we know, that for many families experiencing the highest levels of deprivation, there are often barriers to accessing these opportunities. We held five consultations that collected the views of parents, particularly those who are marginalised, migrant and refugee parents, one-parent families, and parents from Traveller and Roma communities. A report was submitted to the Department in May.

Webinar on Income Supports for Children living in Direct Provision

On 10 May 2023, we hosted an online event focused on the inadequacy of income supports for children and families living in Direct Provision. The purpose of the event was to highlight the shortfall of the current income supports and the negative impact on children, young people and families caused by the lack of progress over successive Budgets. The Vincentian MESL Research Centre presented the findings of a new research paper focused on the adequacy of existing and proposed income supports for children and their families living in direct provision. Dr Salome Mbugua, CEO of AkiDWA chaired the discussion on the day which also included input from Beth Kinyua, a parent and advocate with lived experience of direct provision and two representatives from the Irish Refugee Council's Youth Group who shared the impact such a gap in supports has on young people.

Listen back to Tanya Ward on RTÉ's Morning Ireland [here](#).

Read our press release [here](#).

Watch a recording of the event [here](#).

5. Educational Reform

Senior Cycle Reform

In March 2022, Minister Foley announced an ambitious programme of work for a reimagined Senior Cycle which will empower students to meet the challenges of the 21st century; enrich the student experience and skillset we have in our current system; and embed wellbeing and reduce stress levels for our students. Earlier this year, Tanya Ward, Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance was appointed to the senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board. The Board will have responsibility for overseeing the redevelopment and reform of the Senior Cycle.

As part of the redevelopment of Senior Cycle the Minister for Education has also decided to establish the **Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum**. The Children's Rights Alliance have been appointed to the Partners' Forum. We held our first meeting with 28 members to brief them on this opportunity. The briefing took place on 24 May and included a presentation on current reforms by Department Assistant Secretary General, David Tatton and was followed up with a member's information meeting on 15 June. If you have questions regarding our work on educational reform, please contact [Julie](#).

New SPHE Curriculum

On Wednesday 16 May, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment published the new curriculum for SPHE for Junior Cycle. The new Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum follows four key strands: (1) Understanding myself and others, (2) Making healthy choices, (3) Relationships and Sexuality and (4) Emotional Wellbeing.

You can read our press release [here](#).

Citizens Assembly on the Future of Education

On 01 March, we held our first meeting of our Members Working Group on the Citizen's Assembly on the Future of Education with representatives from 12 member organisations. The purpose of the meeting was to bring members together to discuss how best to ensure children and young people's voices are heard and what issues the members feel should be part of the assembly. The Alliance is working on developing a working paper on the issues raised and will be holding a follow-up meeting, details of which will be circulated in the coming week. If you have any questions on this work, please contact [Margaret](#).

6. National Movement for Children and Young People

Membership

As an Alliance, we are proud to use our collective voices to work together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. In May, we welcomed two new members to the Alliance, The Wheel and Meath Women's Refugee Centre. Our membership now

stands at almost 150 not-for-profit organisations from all across Ireland.

We always love to hear from our members. If you have any feedback on any aspect of your membership or if you are interested in becoming a member, please get in touch with us at members@childrensrights.ie

Membership Spotlight

Doras
Promoting and Protecting Human Rights

'Our membership is hugely beneficial in our efforts to ensure the rights of migrant and refugee families are respected and protected. Through our work we routinely meet children who are affected by food poverty and by having to live in Direct Provision or equally unsuitable emergency accommodation. The work of the Children's Rights Alliance to ensure that their rights and the rights of all children are to the fore across key policy areas is vital. In working towards our shared goals, we benefit greatly from the regular panel sessions and briefings, and greatly appreciate the access provided to relevant information through tools like the Oireachtas Monitor.'

John Lannon, CEO Doras

Tusla Dialogue

Our ongoing dialogue meetings with Tusla - the Child and Family Agency remains an engaging opportunity for our member organisations to participate in constructive discussion with senior decision makers in Tusla. In May, we welcomed 28 members to our first in-person dialogue meeting with interim CEO, Kate Duggan. At the meeting, members received an overview of Tusla's new Strategic Plan and priorities for the year ahead. The meeting also provides a forum for members to raise their concerns for discussion with Tusla senior management. These included the Tusla Reform Programme, children in care, residential services, after-care and educational support services. For information about your organisation's participation in future meetings, please contact Karla at karla@childrensrights.ie



A new HSE dialogue

Following on from the success of our Tusla dialogue, we recently shared the news with members about our new bi-annual dialogue with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and CEO Bernard Gloster. The HSE provides public health and social care services to everyone living in Ireland. We held our first meeting online on Wednesday 10 May, at which 28 members had the opportunity to raise issues, concerns and questions with the CEO. Issues included the interaction between services for children in care as well as mental health provision for children. We hope the new dialogue will enhance communication and information exchange, as well as fostering a long-term relationship with a key stakeholder to the Alliance members and our wider network.

If you have any questions regarding future dialogues, please contact [Julie](#).

Member Events Coming Up

We are looking forward to seeing you at our next in person and online meetings!

21 June: In person workshop on how to communicate effectively and persuasively about Child Poverty. This free for members training will be delivered by Frameworks, the leading UK think tank who have helped the UK Child Poverty campaigns to be more impactful with the general public by helping craft messaging that aims to change hearts as well as minds to solve issues.

Please RSVP to members@childrensrights.ie

22 June: Meeting with DCEDIY Secretary General Kevin McCarthy (Online) 11.30am - 1pm. This is a terrific opportunity for you to hear from Kevin on the work the department has planned and to ask questions. Please register at events@childrensrights.ie

27 June: Children's Rights Alliance AGM 2pm, Woodquay, Dublin City Centre. Please register [here](#).

AGM will be followed by a keynote speech from Minister for Education Norma Foley. Please register [here](#).

We hope to see you there!

Organisational News

The Alliance Team is growing!

We are delighted to have welcomed Gillian Hogan, who has joined the team as our new Communications Officer in April.

Watch this space!

Keep an eye out for member emails and our social media profiles for new opportunities to work with our dynamic and impactful team!

Jobs and Opportunities

Jobs

EPIC - [Various](#)

Barnardos - [Various](#)

One Family - [Admin & Operations Manager](#)

Early Childhood Ireland - [Early Childhood Administrator](#)

Belong To - [Finance Grants Officer](#)

Focus Ireland - [Philanthropy and Legal Officer](#)

Tenders & Other Opportunities

The Wheel - [Future Board Leaders](#)

Jigsaw - [Youth Mental Health Training Courses](#)

Belong To - [Rainbow Award](#)

Events

#SimonTalks: [Health Needs of Housing First Participants](#) - 26 June

Pavee Point, [Traveller Voices at the Irish Museum of Modern Art](#) - 29 June

Funding

Irish Youth Foundation - [Coca-Cola Thank You Fund](#)

[Creative Youth Nurture Fund](#)

Research and Resources

Non-Governmental

Ombudsman for Children's Office - [A Piece of My Mind – Children's Mental Health Survey](#)

Inclusion Ireland – [Report on the Pathway to Inclusive Education](#)

Governmental

Creative Ireland – [Creative Youth Plan](#)

CSO- [Sexual Violence Survey 2022 – Main Results](#)

Heads and General Scheme of [the Child Care \(Amendment\) Bill 2023](#)

[Overview of the Policy, Social and Economic Context Related to Growing Up in Ireland Cohort '24](#)

Announcement of [increased specialist supports for children with visual and hearing impairments](#)

[Children in Care and Young Adults Leaving Care: a literature review of Irish research](#)

[Free Primary Schoolbooks Scheme](#)

Thank you to all of our funders, members and friends for your continued solidarity and support.

Visit us at childrensrights.ie

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