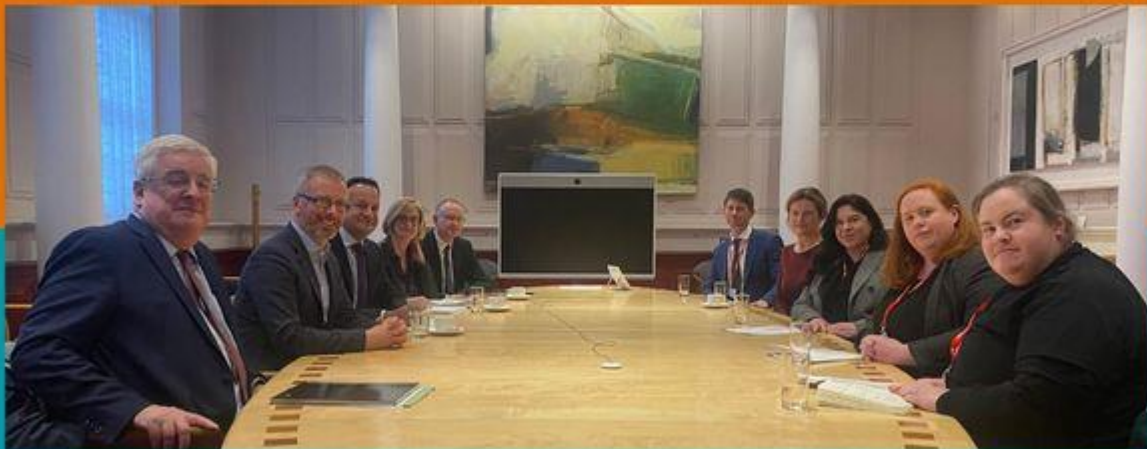


Children's Rights Now

CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS
ALLIANCE

Uniting Voices For Children

NEWSLETTER 2023 ISSUE 1



Dear Members and Alliance friends,

The first two months of the year have been some of the busiest of late in the Alliance. We began the year with a meeting alongside Barnardos, with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman. The meeting focused on the scale and scope of the newly announced Child Poverty and Wellbeing Unit which is due to be established in the Department of Taoiseach at the end of Quarter 1 this year. The Unit has the potential to be a gamechanger in our ambitious goal to end child poverty and is coming at a critical time in Ireland, with the latest data published by the CSO showing that the number of children impacted by poverty increased across the board in 2022.

As we issue this newsletter, we unfortunately mark one year on from the outbreak of war on Ukraine with the Russian aggression continuing to have an enormous impact on the number of refugees arriving to Ireland and across Europe. Our focus continues to be on safeguarding, the reception response and education. We continue to work with members and stakeholders as part of the Civil Society Ukrainian Forum as pressure on accommodation increases. If we can assist you in your work, please contact us.

In January, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child continued their examination of Ireland’s record on children’s rights. Ahead of the two-day hearing, we published our alternative report, Are We There Yet, an interactive publication that highlights key issues for children and young people and details 73 recommendations to the Irish Government.

At the end of January, a State delegation travelled to Geneva to enter into a constructive dialogue with the UN Committee. I travelled over with Alliance team members and our member network to witness the proceedings. Before the hearing, a significant report published by the Mental Health Commission revealed further failings in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services that placed a spotlight on the need for urgent improvements in the State provision of mental health care and support to our young people.

At the end of February, we published our fifteenth Report Card – the third tracking the Government’s progress on their commitments for children in the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, our members, for your continued engagement with the Report Card process and support on the launch. We were delighted to see its content raised in the Dáil several times last week, including by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

I look forward to meeting some of you at our next in-person event in April. I hope it is the beginning of more of more in-person meetings to come together as we continue to build a national movement for children and young people.

Thank you, as always, for your continued and greatly valued support.



Tanya Ward
Chief Executive



Fostering Children's Rights

UNCRC

In January, the Children's Rights Alliance published [Are We There Yet?](#), our alternative report on Ireland's record on children's rights to coincide with Ireland's examination by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The report, which followed written and thematic consultations with our members, details **73 recommendations** to the UN that highlight the need for urgent and significant Government action. As part of this report, we hear directly from young people and parents on how persistent issues pertaining to children's rights impact their lives and, in some cases, irrevocably change it.

The UN Committee examinations are our opportunity to weigh up if we are delivering for children and young people. The Children's Rights Alliance led a delegation of our members to Geneva for the two-day hearing at the end of January. Following this, the UN Committee published its own recommendations (['Concluding Observations'](#)) on how the Irish State could better uphold and protect the rights of children and young people.



Listen back! [Tanya Ward joined RTE's Drivetime](#) to discuss the UN's recommendations.

Report Card

Our annual **Report Card** series remains a key resource in ensuring that Government keeps its promises to children and young people. Report Card 2023 is the third analysis under the Programme for Government: Our Shared Future, tracking the Government's commitments to children in health, housing, education, early years, poverty and equality. An independent panel of experts graded the Government's performance and this year that included two 'A' grades in online safety and an 'E' grade on youth mental health. At this year's launch we were delighted to be joined by Dr Sindy Joyce, Karen Kiernan and Ian Power. We also heard directly from young people involved in Youth Work Ireland and Foróige youth groups, on their own experience of living in Direct Provision. You can watch their powerful testimonies and the full launch event [here](#).



Listen Back! Tanya Ward joined [Morning Ireland](#) to discuss the highs and lows of Report Card 2023

Listen Back! Tanya Ward and Ian Power discussed the Government's grade in youth mental health on Newstalk's [The Hard Shoulder](#)

Read [The Irish Examiner's](#) overview of the launch event and our panel's inputs.

Children's Rights in Law, Policies and Practice

Children's Mental Health Services

Almost a year to the date of the publication of the HSE Review of South Kerry Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the Mental Health Commission published [an interim report](#) in January that highlighted further failings and concerning shortcomings in the provision of youth mental health services in Ireland. The Children's Rights Alliance press release on the report is available [here](#). You can listen back to interviews on this important report here:



Tanya Ward on [RTE's Morning Ireland](#).

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

Through consultations with groups that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, the 'Building Children's Futures' project, led by the Children's Rights Alliance, will examine the effect of the pandemic public health measures on services for children and young people. With our partners at the University of Galway, we have established a youth advisory committee that will include representative voices from specific groups of children disproportionately impacted during Covid-19.

These are Children and Young People

- living in poverty and experiencing educational disadvantage;
- with special educational needs;
- accessing health services;
- accessing mental health services;
- accessing disability services;
- Traveller and Roma Communities;
- refugee/asylum seeking children and young people;
- at risk of violence, abuse and neglect;
- living in emergency accommodation.

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. We are delighted to share that we have commissioned the Early Childhood Research Centre (ECRC) at Dublin City University to undertake research on the development of a public model of childcare in Ireland. We will be in touch with members shortly about participation in an advisory group to oversee this research. For more information on this work, contact [Naomi](#).

Read the latest Children's Rights Alliance Submissions:

- [Submission on the Reform of the Civil Legal Aid System](#)

Poverty and Social Exclusion

Child Poverty Unit

At the end of 2022, incoming Taoiseach Leo Varadkar announced his intention to establish a new unit in the Department of Taoiseach focused on child poverty and wellbeing. [We welcomed](#) this significant development as a gamechanger in the efforts to turn the tide of child poverty we are seeing in Ireland today. The new unit follows the successful track record of other child poverty offices in Scotland and in New Zealand. In January, the Children's Rights Alliance met with Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman TD. At the meeting, we discussed the proposed scale of the new unit as well as the need for resourcing and adequate staffing. In February, the Alliance called for this again to emphasise the importance of supporting ambitious targets for the unit following the publication of the latest Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) data from the Central Statistics Office which showed an increase across the board in child poverty. You can read our press release on the figures [here](#).

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 focus continues to be on issues including: 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 are liaising with Tusla and the Department of Education and we will be arranging a member briefing on this topic over the next quarter. If you would like to be involved or hear more about this work, please contact [Karla](#).

Holiday Hunger Food Provision Scheme

As a means to address this 'holiday hunger', we ran a food provision scheme over Christmas and January this year, supporting many of our member organisations, including schools, to provide food vouchers and hampers to children and their families. There was an [overwhelming response](#) to this limited scheme and we would like to thank our valued donors

who worked with us to secure vital funding to support thousands of children and young people over the winter months.

Reminder: Children’s Rights Alliance members can still apply to our current food poverty initiative kindly supported by the Bank of Ireland through the Community Foundation of Ireland. Through this funding call, member organisations can apply for support to address direct food costs for the children, young people and their families that they work with in May. In order to apply for the funding please download and complete the application form: [available here](#). Please note this is available to Alliance members only and the closing date for applications is **1pm Monday 20 March 2023**

Educational Reform

Citizen’s 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.



Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board

This month, our Chief Executive, Tanya Ward was appointed to the [Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board](#) by Minister for Education, Norma Foley. The Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board will have responsibility for overseeing the Senior Cycle redevelopment work and it will report regularly to the Minister on its progress.

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. We are delighted to have recently

welcomed [Archways](#), [Grow It Yourself Ireland](#) and [Kerry Diocesan Youth Services](#) to our membership. Looking forward to working with you all!

We are delighted to announce that Mark Smith has recently joined our membership team and would love to hear from you if you have any feedback on any aspect of your membership or if you are interested in [becoming a member](#).

Tusla Dialogue

The Dialogue between Tusla and the Children’s Rights Alliance remains an engaging opportunity for our member organisations to participate in constructive discussion with senior decision members in Tusla. Our sixth meeting took place in February and marked the last meeting with outgoing Tusla CEO Bernard Gloster. We would like to take the opportunity to thank Bernard for his time, interest, generosity of spirit, the openness of his engagement, and his passionate support for Children’s Rights Alliance members and children’s rights more broadly. Members will have the opportunity to meet with incoming interim CEO, Kate Duggan at the next dialogue meeting which will be held **in-person on 4 May from 10am – 3pm** in Tusla Headquarters, Dublin 8. Please RSVP to Karla at karla@childrensrights.ie

Children's Rights Alliance Helpline



The graphic features a light blue background. On the left, the text 'Children's Rights Alliance Helpline' is written in teal, followed by the phone number '01 902 0494' in large orange font with a red underline. Below this, a table lists the helpline hours: Mondays (10am – 4pm), Wednesdays (10am – 4pm), and Fridays (10am – 12 noon). On the right side, there is a yellow clock icon and a blue sign hanging from a string that says 'OPEN' in white capital letters.

Children's Rights Alliance Helpline	
01 902 0494	
Mondays	10am – 4pm
Wednesdays	10am – 4pm
Fridays	10am – 12 noon

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

Organisational News

New Team Members:

We are delighted to have welcome additional team members in the recent months. Maria Colfer has joined the team as our Finance Officer and Karen O’Brien as Operations Lead.

Watch this space! It is an exciting time at the Children’s Rights Alliance as our team continues to grow. Keep an eye out for member emails and our social media profiles for soon to be announced new opportunities within a dynamic and impactful team!

Jobs and Opportunities

Jobs

- National Women's Council of Ireland - [Head of Development and Policy](#)
- Women's Aid - [National Freephone Helpline Support Worker](#)
- Aspire - [CEO \(Maternity Cover\)](#)

Tenders

- Women's Aid [Too Into You Project Evaluation](#)

Research and Resources

Non-Governmental

- Child Law Project (CCLRP) - [Volume 2 Case Reports](#)
- Early Childhood Ireland - [Childcare Barometer 2023](#)
- ESRI - [Housing adequacy and child outcomes in early and middle childhood Report](#)
- ISPCC - [Strategy 2021 - 2024](#)
- SVP Ireland - [Warm, Safe, Connected? Report](#)
- BeLongTo - it's Our Social Media [Campaign](#)

Governmental

- [Department of Children \(DCEDIY\) Statement](#) on Transfer of specialist disability services to Department of Health
- [Accommodation Strategy](#) for people seeking protection in Ireland and Accommodation Working Group established
- [Draft General Scheme](#) of a Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill
- Young People's Participation in Youth Organisations [Report](#)
- [Programme Board](#) to oversee planning for a dedicated Agency for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare

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

Visit us at childrensrights.ie
RCN 20031909

