

# Building Children's Futures

Using Children's Rights to recover from the Global Pandemic

The Children's Report



Natasha Daniels and Danielle Kennan



European  
Commission

# Foreword

by the Children and Young People's Advisory Group



# As representatives of the Children and Young People's Advisory Group, we are delighted to provide this foreword to **'Building Children's Futures: Using Children's Rights to Recover from the Global Pandemic: The Children's Report'**.



Our group is made up of eight members from across Ireland, and we have been directly involved in guiding the research in this report from the start. We first came together as a group in December 2022, and since then we have had a mix of in-person and online meetings, facilitated by Foróige and the University of Galway. We have been a part of every aspect, from designing the approaches to data collection, testing activities to make sure they were clear for children and young people, analysing the data that was gathered, and helping to form the final recommendations. Five of us were also trained in the University of Galway's Youth As Researchers programme, and co-conducted the interviews with senior decision-makers.



**In this foreword we want to set out our experience of being involved in this project and what we have gained from it. We will also explain why we think it is important for children and young people like us to have a seat at the table and meaningful opportunities to take part in initiatives and issues that affect us.**

This project looks at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people's rights in Ireland. Our own experiences during the pandemic made us very aware that the effects on children and young people were both positive and negative, and affected many different aspects of our lives. **We also know that children and young people didn't understand how decisions were made during the pandemic.**

One of the things we found most interesting about the research was that it explored:

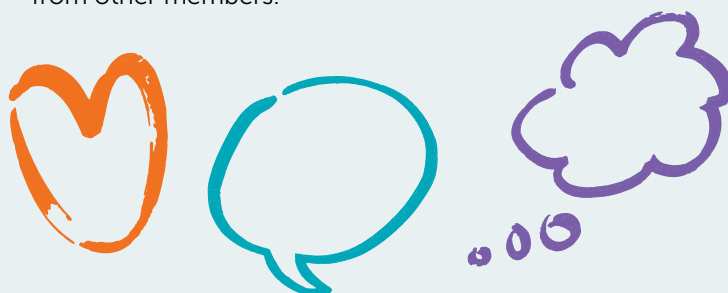
**1. both the experiences of children and young people themselves, and**

**2. the thought process and intentions behind how decisions were made.**

By hearing first hand from the people who were part of this, we were able to see behind the scenes, and we have a better understanding of how and why decisions were made.

**It is not common for people our age to have this level of insight into the way that government works, and it has been amazing to have that opportunity.**

Our experience of being on the Children and Young People's Advisory Group has been very positive. It has felt like a safe environment where we have been able to meet like-minded people, make connections, share our own views, and hear different perspectives from other members.



**Being involved has built our confidence and inspired some of us to find and take up other opportunities where we can have our voices heard.**

For those of us who co-conducted interviews with Natasha and Danielle, we had a mixed experience which varied according to who we were interviewing. Some interviewees treated us as the lead interviewer, speaking directly to us and simplifying what they were saying - it was great to be taken seriously and feel respected. However, others directed their answers to the adult researcher who was present, or used language that was hard to understand, which made it difficult for us to take part fully. We think it is important that young people who take on roles such as this are treated as equal participants by everyone involved, so that our participation is meaningful and not tokenistic. It is hard to say whether a young person being in the room affected the answers that we were given. We hope that interviewees didn't feel that they couldn't be as open with their responses because of a young person being present.

It was really important for us that our group was able to meet in person as well as online. Meeting in person made it easier to interact and get to know each other. We felt more comfortable to share our personal experiences and opinions when we were physically in the same space, and this helped us work well together as a team.

**We think it is important that groups like ours have the time and support to meet in person, as it makes a real difference to our ability to participate.**

We feel it was significant that we were invited to form the Children and Young People's Advisory Group.

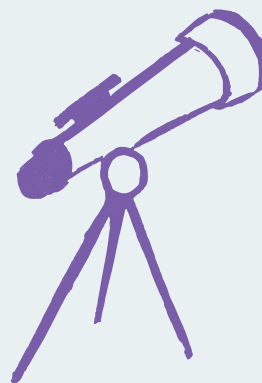
**It is so important that children and young people have opportunities to shape policy and decisions on the issues that affect them - we need to be given a seat at the table where we are fully participating.**

We have felt respected and listened to, that young people and adult facilitators in the group were all on one level rather than us being talked down to. This has been very helpful to allow us to express ourselves freely, have our voices heard, and hold the project team and decision makers to account.

More than this, we hope that our participation in this group will inspire other young people to feel that they can get involved in projects like this, be heard, and help to make change. If young people see other young people represented in this way, it can create a domino effect and encourage them to go for opportunities they might not normally go for.

Looking to the future, we hope our work on this research will help to shape how policies and decisions that impact on children and young people's rights are made in a positive way. We also hope that more children and young people will continue to be offered a real seat at the decision-making table, where their voices are heard and listened to, and they are able to contribute to making change for the better.

*Anna Finnegan,  
Christopher O'Sullivan,  
Cian Birmingham,  
and Latisha McCrudden*



The Building Children's Futures: Using Children's Rights to Recover from the Global Pandemic is funded by the EU Commission and is being led by the Children's Rights Alliance in partnership with the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth, Tusla, Ireland's Child and Family Agency and Children and Young People's Services

Committees (CYPSC), Eurochild, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre University of Galway, and Foróige. Using Ireland as a case study, the project aim is to explore how a child rights-based approach, utilising Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs), can be embedded in decision-making in times of emergency.

We would like to sincerely thank all of the members of the Child and Young Persons Advisory Group for their dedicated work throughout this research report:

**Amy**, Kildare (17)

**Anna**, South Dublin (16)

**Ash**, South Dublin (16)

**Christopher**, South Dublin (18)

**Cian**, South Dublin (15)

**Jack**, Limerick (17)

**Latisha**, Roscommon (19)

**Rayaa**, Cork (17)

Our deepest gratitude and appreciation also goes to all the participants who took part in the research, both the children and young people and the senior public officials.

