

Children's Rights Now

CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS
ALLIANCE
Uniting Voices For Children

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2: 2024



Dear Members and Alliance friends,

Since our last issue of our Newsletter, we have been busy working across all key priorities in our strategic plan, building the momentum behind our issue-based campaigns in the lead up to this year's Budget.

This month, we held our third **End Child Poverty Week** placing a spotlight on child poverty and its impact on children, young people and families ahead of Budget Day. This event-packed week focused on key thematic areas of child poverty including early years, education, food poverty and child welfare and alternative care. Following End Child Poverty Week, we took the conversation to the political decision-makers at a [panel event](#) in Buswells Hotel where political representatives outlined their party's plans to break the cycle of poverty in Budget 2025 and beyond. We emphasised our call

for a Children's Budget in light of new research we commissioned that found [high public support](#) for child poverty measures.

We continued our **Online Safety Campaign** for Government to step up to the critical role Ireland plays in the global movement to regulate online services and platforms. We were delighted to be joined by Prof. Sonia Livingstone (LSE and 5Rights Foundation) at our Online Safety event in June to discuss children's rights in the digital world. The event covered children's access to harmful and violent content, the need for better digital and media literacy education, digital marketing and the need for a robust Online Safety Code. This month, our Online Safety Co-ordinator Noeline Blackwell was appointed as a member of the [Online Health Taskforce](#) established by Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly to develop a public health response to harms caused to children and young people by certain types of online activity.

As we wrap up the foundational work as part of the European Commission funded '**Building Children's Futures**' project, we continued to critically examine how pandemic public health measures affected children, particularly the most vulnerable. In collaboration with partners across Europe, the project has underscored the vital need for Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) to shape more inclusive policies. In conjunction with project partners CYPSC, we have supported the introduction of CRIA as a concept to communities across Ireland by rolling out training on their use. In July, we had the opportunity, alongside project partners, to present our findings to key European stakeholders at the international conference 'Using children's rights to recover from the Global Pandemic' in Malta, hosted by Eurochild. The positive feedback experienced by project partners in response to the research shines a positive light on the future participation of children in decision-making processes in emergency situations.

With our membership growing to 159 dedicated organisations, it continues to be an exciting time in the Alliance with consistent opportunities for engagement. As we look ahead to Budget Day and a possible general election, our collective voice for children and young people will be an important lever to inform policies and shape solutions that will make a difference for children and young people.

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



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

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

Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online: Youth Safety Online Event

Ireland has a critical role in the global movement to regulate online services and platforms. Following our AGM on 26 June, we held an in-person event focused on the importance of regulation of the online world and the need to prioritise children and young people's safety in the digital space. Prof. Sonia Livingstone (LSE and 5Rights Foundation), one of the thought-leaders in children's digital rights, delivered a keynote address followed by a panel discussion including inputs from Alex Cooney (CyberSafeKids), Prof Debbie Ging (Dublin City University), Fiona Jennings (ISPCC). The event was chaired by Noeline Blackwell (Children's Rights Alliance) and covered a range of topics from children's access to harmful and violent content, the need for better digital and media literacy education, digital marketing and the need for a robust Online Safety Code.



Read: Our press release **on the event**

Listen: Prof Sonia Livingstone on RTE's Drivetime

Watch: Event recording

Online Health Taskforce

Our Online Safety Coordinator Noeline Blackwell joins members and stakeholders on new online taskforce. The taskforce will develop a public health response to the negative impact of social media on children and can make a series of recommendations including tighter regulation and tougher laws. The taskforce will be chaired by children's rights advocate, Jillian van Turnhout, with other members including Online Safety Commissioner Niamh Hodnett, Brian Mac Namee (UCD), Prof. Debbie Ging (Dublin City University), Alex Cooney (CyberSafeKids), Philip Dodd (Psychiatrist & Department of Health) and Eoghan Cleary (secondary school teacher), Rachel Harper (Primary teacher), Pete Lunn (Economic and Social Research Institute), Dr Abigail Collins (HSE) and two representatives of the National

Youth Assembly of Ireland. Details [here](#).

Member Consultation on Online Safety Code

On 8 August, we brought members together to discuss recent developments in online safety, specifically observations and feedback on the Alliance's response to the revised Online Safety Codes and, contributions and inputs to the EU Commission call for evidence to feed into the guidelines for online service providers. 17 members attended and helped inform and shape the Alliance's submission to Coimisiún na Meán, published on 21 August. The submission looked at the consultation document for the Draft Media Service Code and Media Service Rules on Audiovisual On-demand Media Service Providers. As these services become more prevalent and accessible, the risks become increasingly multifaceted, involving exposure to harmful content, privacy issues, and negative behavioural impacts. Our submission urges that the Code fully reflects the obligations and principles contained in the UNCRC by providing children, young people, and their parents with the appropriate information and resources to help enhance digital literacy while supporting children's rights to education and protection in the digital space.

Submission: To Coimisiún na Meán on the Draft Online Safety Code.

>> Future Focus

Over the next couple of months, our online safety campaign work will focus on the draft Online Safety Code following its review by the European Commission, under the Digital Services Act. Our priority will be to ensure the best interests of children and young people are a central consideration in the Code and that young people's safety online is prioritised.

Read: Our latest press release.

Read: RTÉ News coverage of the issue.

Member Advocacy Session – General Election

In June, we held our first member event focused on the next Programme for Government. The purpose of the session was to provide members with an opportunity to develop their advocacy and campaigning skills as we move toward the general election. A strong Programme for Government, with a focus on children and young people is vital for ensuring that positive strides made to date in the area of children's rights are built upon over the lifetime of the next Government. It is key that there is a strong children and young people's movement coming together to advocate for the most pressing issues for children and young people in Ireland to be central in the next Government. 21 members attended the in-person session. Keep an eye out for further updates as we prepare for the next general election!

Rights Here! Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, Youth

Campaign

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, Youth Campaign have this week launched a new campaign to increase public awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The campaign will feature across radio and social media for the next month. You can find more information and resources on the new website page: www.gov.ie/UNCRC

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 Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth, Eurochild, Foróige, Tusla, Ireland's Child and Family Agency and Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC), and UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (NUIG).

To support the implementation of CRIA in Ireland, we rolled out introductory training alongside project partners, CYPSC, on the use of Child Rights Impact Assessments. This training was received by key stakeholders in decision making and embedded CRIA as an integral part of the decision-making process to ensure children's rights are considered at all times, particularly in times of emergency.

In July, we joined partners of the 'Building Children's Futures' project in Malta for the group's international hybrid conference hosted by Eurochild. The conference focused on the role of Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) in developing public policies with children and youth representatives across the EU, and brought together up to 200 children, governments and civil society organisations to discuss the importance of including children in decision-making. Our EU Programmes and Know Your Rights Project Manager, Karla Charles joined Irish project partners on the first panel of the conference to reflect on key findings from the research and best practices across the EU in using CRIAs to respond to the pandemic. Our Director of Legal, Policy and Services, Julie Ahern, chaired the second panel of the day and after a day of stimulating discussion, brought the event to a close.



Building Children's Futures - Resources

Earlier this year, we launched the first resources as part of the project - [The Children's Report](#). In Quarter 2, our focus pivoted to the development and rollout of pilot training on the implementation of Child Rights Impact Assessments, including the development of a training video. In July, we published two new resources as part of this project. The first is a research report on the use of CRIAs in other European countries and what key considerations the Government should take here in the rollout of CRIAs. We also developed a CRIA toolkit which can be used by professionals, stakeholders and decision-makers.

4. Poverty and Social Exclusion

Tackling Holiday Hunger

On Wednesday, 3 July we held a public event focused on the issue of holiday hunger. Through an expert panel of speakers and spotlighting vital supports currently provided by community and civil society organisations, the event focused discussion on best practices for bridging prevailing gaps in Governmental support. Prof Colette Kelly, Director of the Health Promotion Research Centre University of Galway and Joint-Principal Investigator in HBSC Report joined us as keynote speaker. She was followed by a panel discussed chaired by Dr Naomi Feely (Children's Rights Alliance) with inputs from Daire Hennessy (CEO, Citywise), Simon Bolger (Family Support Worker, Crosscare Dundrum), and Jean O'Gorman (Area Manager for North Dublin, Foróige). Thirty-eight attended the event in-person with representatives from our membership as well as the Department of Taoiseach, Department of Health, Department of Agriculture, Department of Children, the HSE and the Ombudsman for Children's Office.



[Read:](#) Our press release

[Read:](#) Tanya Ward's Letter to Editor, The Irish Times

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

We were delighted to see the issue and the urgent need for action recognised by Taoiseach Simon Harris who [confirmed that the measure was being looked at](#) by his own department's Child Poverty Unit.

End Child Poverty Week 2024

End Child Poverty Week took place between Monday 2 – Friday 6 September, focusing on key thematic areas of child poverty including early years, education, food poverty, child welfare and alternative care. The Week focused on key priorities for this year's budget to ensure it considered measures to break the cycle of poverty for children and young people. The Week succeeded in keeping child poverty on top of the agenda during what many consider to be the crunch time for budget negotiations. With national and local media coverage across the week, we built momentum behind our call for a Children's Budget and showcased the weight of support behind the campaign. A full summary of the events, recordings and press releases is available on our website [here](#). You can also read a more detailed report on our website [here](#).



Budget 2025

On 11 July, we attended the Department of Social Protection's pre-Budget 2025 Forum at Dublin Castle. As part of this event, we joined a workshop discussion on Supporting Families and Children and alongside many of our members, called for

targeted income supports for children and their families. This included calling to raise the Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC) and other supports that would benefit children in families most at risk of poverty. We also raised the need to expand access to hot school meals and introduce a pilot programme to tackle holiday hunger, with Minister Joe O'Brien. On 28 August, we took part in the Community and Voluntary Pillar delegation meeting with Minister for Finance and Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan.

Delivery and Reform to discuss Budget 2025 priorities and emphasised the importance of delivering on the political commitment to tackle child poverty through targeting increases in social welfare to families on the lowest incomes as well as investing in key services such as the Equal Start Model.

As part of our pre-Budget work, we commissioned polling to get an insight into the public support for child poverty measures. The results were clear and showed an overwhelming level of support for a blend of universal and targeted measures - a Budget that delivers for children and young people but importantly, goes the extra mile for the families who need additional support.



Publications:

- [New RED C Research: Public Support for Child Poverty Budget Measures](#)
- [Children's Rights Alliance Pre- Budget 2025 Submission](#)

UNHCR Children's Briefing on EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

On 5 July, we organised a member briefing on the EU Migration Pact by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ireland. The meeting was in response to the Government's announcement of its intention to opt into the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. More information available [here](#). The EU Pact is a complex piece of legislation which will introduce significant reforms to the whole asylum system including for children and young people. While the Pact itself is final the Government is still working on its implementation plan, which is due towards the end of 2024. Hosted by UNHCR, the briefing was an opportunity to learn more about the children's aspect of the legislation.

5. Educational Reform

Senior Cycle Reform

As part of the redevelopment of the Senior Cycle, the Minister for Education

established the Senior Cycle Redevelopment Partners' Forum. Children's Rights Alliance have been appointed to the Partners' Forum. The focus of the work in recent months has been on subject development, assessment research and the development of the wider senior cycle reform programme. We were delighted to attend the recent launch by the Department of Education of two new Senior Cycle subjects: Drama, Film & Theatre Studies and Climate Action & Sustainable Development, in the Irish Film Institute where young people were front and centre of the launch activities.

First Meeting of our Education Advisory Group

Ensuring educational reform respects children and young people's rights and supporting education equality are key priorities in our Strategic Plan. Through the support of our members, we continue to work on a number of areas to progress these priorities including Senior Cycle Reform, Alternative Education, Early Years and CAFE (Citizens Assembly on the Reform of Education). This September, we held the first meeting of our new Education Advisory Group which will inform our work in this space. We welcomed 24 members to this in-person meeting at which, issues like the impact of the points system on young people's wellbeing at Senior Cycle, the importance of teaching and learning design and adaptations to meet the needs of neurodivergent learners and learners with specific needs, and the need to support schools currently outside of the DEIS scheme with regard to the impact of homelessness, poverty, addiction and the diversity of the population in schools. If you have questions about this aspect of our work, please contact our Senior Education Officer, [Siobhán](#).

Alternative Education

Through our position on the Working Group to oversee the work on the Review of Out of Hours School Provision, the Children's Rights Alliance continues to place a heightened focus on the need to expand and fund out-of-school education provision to ensure a child-centred approach to education by providing alternatives that are best suited to the individual child. In February, we held a member briefing with 25 of our members attending, outlining the work that has been carried out since 2023.

Through the position on the Advisory Group, the Alliance also reviewed and gave detailed feedback on the draft report produced by the Department of Education, with the final report expected in Quarter 3. Alternative Education was highlighted during End Child Poverty Week, where we heard from four young people, with different experiences of an alternative education option and the significant impact it had on their lives both from an education and personal development perspective. Watch their input in Day 1 of the Week [here](#). For members looking to engage with us in our work in this area, please contact [Julie](#).

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 the past few months, we were delighted to have welcomed new organisations to our movement for children and young people. Our membership now stands at 159 not-for-profit organisations from across Ireland and you can see the full list of our members [here](#).

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 Consultation Policy

The Children's Rights Alliance, working together with our valued members, aims to increase awareness and understanding of children's rights, to identify problems for children and young people and to develop solutions. We are in a unique position to advocate on behalf of our members and as such, we always strive to listen to and be informed by our members on the key issues affecting children and young people so that we can inform senior decision makers, influence policy and effect change. As a member informed Alliance, it is the Board of Directors of the Children's Rights Alliance that makes the strategic decisions for the organisation. You can view our Consultation Policy [here](#).

Tusla Dialogue

Our ongoing dialogue meetings with Tusla-the Child and Family Agency remain an engaging opportunity for our member organisations to participate in constructive discussion with senior decision members in Tusla. The purpose of the dialogue is to ensure a consistent line of communication between the national child protection service and the organisations and staff on the ground working with vulnerable children and young people. They provide a critical forum for Alliance members to raise their key concerns and discuss emerging issues for the children they work with, to inform the decision-making and responses from Tusla and its support services. The next Tusla Dialogue meeting will be held on 19 November 10am – 1pm in Tusla's Head office in Dublin 2 with the pre meeting taking place online on 16 October, 3pm - 4.30pm. To RSVP, please contact events@childrensrights.ie.

HSE Dialogue

Our HSE dialogue seeks to establish ongoing communication with Alliance members and the Health Service Executive (HSE) and CEO Bernard Gloster. It is also an effective way to advocate for, and progress, changes in the provision of public health and social care services to children and young people. 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, our members and our wider network. The next dialogue meeting will take place online in the coming weeks. Please RSVP asap to events@childrensrights.ie.

Youth Homelessness Strategy – Youth Advisory Group

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth are seeking nominations for a Youth Advisory Group to support the development of the methodology for the Youth Homelessness Strategy Consultation. This consultation is part of the development of Action 19 and 20 of Youth Homelessness Strategy, which aim to support members of the LGBTI+ community. To nominate young people for the Youth Advisory Group, willing organisations should send young person's name, age, and their email address via email to info@youthparticipation.ie Monday 30th September 1pm.

[Visit us at childrensrights.ie](http://childrensrights.ie)
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