

Written Updates

in advance of the Examination of Ireland under the UN
Convention on the Rights of the Child

December 2022



Founded in 1995, the Children's Rights Alliance unites over 140 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children in Ireland by making sure that their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services.

Accompaniment Support Service for Children (A.S.S.C.)
Alcohol Action Ireland
Amnesty International Ireland
An Cosán
Aoibhneas
AsIAM
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
ATD Fourth World – Ireland Ltd
Atheist Ireland
Barnardos
Barretstown Camp
Bedford Row Family Project
BeLonG To Youth Services
Blossom Ireland
Bodywhys
Catholic Guides of Ireland
Child Law Project
Childhood Development Initiative
Childminding Ireland
Children in Hospital Ireland
Children's Books Ireland
Children's Grief Centre
Clarecare
COPE Galway
Cork Life Centre
Cork Migrant Centre
Crann Centre
Crosscare
CyberSafeKids
Cycle Against Suicide
Dalkey School Project National School
Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service
Dental Health Foundation of Ireland
Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, UCC
Disability Federation of Ireland
Doras
Down Syndrome Ireland
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
Dyslexia Association of Ireland
Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland
Early Childhood Ireland
Early Learning Initiative (National College of Ireland)
Educate Together
EPIC
Equality for Children
Extern Ireland
FamiliBase
Féach
Focus Ireland
Foróige
Gaelscoileanna Teo
Galway Traveller Movement
Good Shepherd Cork
Helium Arts
Immigrant Council of Ireland
Inclusion Ireland
Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Irish Aftercare Network
Irish Association for Infant Mental Health
Irish Association of Social Workers
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
Irish Foster Care Association
Irish Girl Guides
Irish Heart Foundation
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
Irish Penal Reform Trust
Irish Primary Principals' Network
Irish Refugee Council
Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU)
Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Irish Traveller Movement
Irish Youth Foundation
iScoil
Jack and Jill Children's Foundation
Jigsaw
Katharine Howard Foundation
Kids' Own Publishing Partnership
Kinship Care
Leap Ireland
Let's Grow Together! Infant and Childhood Partnerships CLG.
LGBT Ireland
Mecpaths
Mental Health Reform
Mercy Law Resource Centre
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
Mothers' Union
My Mind
My Project Minding You
Museum of Childhood Ireland
Music Generation
New Directions
National Childhood Network
National Council for the Blind of Ireland
National Forum of Family Resource Centres
National Parents Council Post Primary
National Parents Council Primary
National Youth Council of Ireland
Novas
One Family
One in Four
Parents Plus
Pavee Point
Peter McVerry Trust
Prevention and Early Intervention Network
Psychological Society of Ireland
Rainbow Club Cork
Rainbows Ireland
Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
Realt Beag/Ballyfermot Star
Respond Housing
SAFE Ireland
Saoirse Housing Association
SAOL Beag Children's Centre
Scouting Ireland
School of Education UCD
Sexual Violence Centre Cork
SIPTU
Simon Communities of Ireland
Social Care Ireland
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
SPHE Network
SpunOut.ie
St. Nicholas Montessori College
St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association
St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
TASC
Teachers' Union of Ireland
Terenure College Rugby Football Club
Transgender Equality Network Ireland
The Anne Sullivan Foundation
The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children
The Irish Red Cross
The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
Traveller Visibility Group Ltd
Treoir
UNICEF Ireland
Variety – the Children's Charity of Ireland
Women's Aid
Youngballymun
Young Social Innovators
Youth Advocate Programme Ireland (YAP)
Youth Work Ireland

Children's Rights Alliance

7 Red Cow Lane, Smithfield, Dublin 7, Ireland

Ph: +353 1 662 9400

Email: info@childrensrights.ie

www.childrensrights.ie

The Children's Rights Alliance welcomes the opportunity to submit written updates to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in advance of the Committee's constructive dialogue with Ireland's State Party (State) in January 2023.

The Children's Rights Alliance submitted a comprehensive alternative report to the Committee in August 2022 and a written statement in advance of the pre-session hearing in September 2022. Having regard to these, this submission provides updated information in relation to the following areas:

- Refugee Accommodation Crisis
- Measures to address child poverty and homelessness

Refugee Accommodation Crisis

Ukrainian Refugees: Lack of appropriate and affordable housing is one of the biggest issues facing all peoples in Ireland. It is against this backdrop that 62,425 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Ireland, over 21,000 being children and young people.¹ The State's response to the crisis has been swift and has relied on mostly temporary emergency accommodation such as B&Bs and hotels. A certain proportion of people are staying in pledged accommodation or host families. During the summer months the State had to rely on tents and other forms of temporary accommodation such as halls to accommodate families. Some families have been living in these conditions for up to three weeks.²

On the education side, the Government has set up specialised support teams in each region called REALT. This is a welcome and innovative response which positively has now been extended to all refugees in Ireland. However, a major issue hampering Ukrainian refugee children is accommodation uncertainty. For example, over the summer months, many families were placed in student accommodation but had to relocate in September with no idea where they would be moved to. In addition, it is largely the availability of accommodation rather than the availability of school places that has been guiding the relocation. This means that some children are experiencing challenges locating school places or are spending long periods of time travelling to get to schools.³

People Seeking International Protection: The State's system of providing institutional, segregated accommodation and subsistence, also known as Direct Provision, was first introduced in 2000. The Committee previously voiced concerns that the majority of asylum-seeking and refugee children were accommodated in privately-operated centres which were not subject to adequately independent inspections or covered by national standards.⁴ Since Ireland's last examination, the Government introduced *National Standards* which aim to improve the quality of care and accommodation provided to children and families living in Direct Provision centres.⁵ This is a welcome development. Despite the introduction of the standards, significant issues remain regarding the quality of accommodation. Due to increasing numbers, it has been reported that a

¹ Central Statistics Office, 'Arrivals from Ukraine in Ireland Series 7' <<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/FP/p-ai/arrivalsfromukraineinirelandseries7/>> accessed 15 December 2022.

² Liz Dunphy, 'We don't know where we'll be in three weeks': Ukrainians in Ireland facing uncertainty, *Irish Examiner*, 24 July 2022

³ Carl O'Brien, 'About 3,800 recently arrived Ukrainian children may need school places', *The Irish Times*, 24 August 2022.

⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland (2016) CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4*, 65.

⁵ Department of Justice and Equality, 'National Standards' (DOJE 2019).

large numbers of people, including children, are sleeping on the floor of a hotel and dozens of makeshift beds in its conference rooms.⁶

As at 13 November there are 3,580 children in IPAS accommodation centres. In total, there 17,192 people in IPAS accommodation centres. There are currently (13 November) 1,414 children in Temporary Accommodation and the average length of stay in this accommodation for these children is 6.7 months.⁷ The number of children and young people in Emergency Accommodation Centres or Temporary Accommodation has significantly increased from June 2021, when there were 174 children in emergency accommodation.⁸ Given that many of these sites operate on a commercial basis, often as hotels, not all staff have training on the needs of those seeking international protection.⁹ This lack of awareness is compounded by the inability of all these sites to respect the rights of children, especially in relation to independent cooking facilities and appropriate private leisure space. Children living in emergency accommodation have also experienced challenges in accessing their education rights.¹⁰

A pressing issue now are conditions in a reception centre, City West where due to overcrowding people have been sleeping on chairs and on the floor without mattress in large halls with insufficient volumes of facilities such as showers.¹¹ In September 2022, over 200 were left without accommodation in Ireland due to “lack of availability”¹² resulting in reports of a number of refugees having to sleep on the streets.¹³ Protests are occurring daily in Dublin and across the country against new arrivals into local communities. There is pressure to find emergency and alternative accommodation in hotels and the private sector. Conditions in centres like in East Wall in Dublin are not only sub-standard but dangerous especially for vulnerable mothers, pregnant people, and children. There have been third party reports of children being out of school, and many people sharing mattresses in overcrowded centres. The best interest of the child test is not being applied when making decisions regarding accommodation for children and young people. We have heard reports that families have been moved from hotel accommodation to a site in East Wall where they are being placed in a partitioned room, sleeping on floors with lighting controlled.¹⁴

Measures to Address Child Poverty and Homelessness

Child Poverty: In November 2022 the Central Statistics Office published updated statistics on enforced deprivation. One in every five children in Ireland experienced enforced deprivation – that is a quarter of a million children and young people living in a house where the heating is not on, or they are without a hot, nutritious meal on the table. Children are experiencing a higher rate of deprivation than the population as a whole. Persistently, we see lone parent families, families with children, and those in rented accommodation experiencing difficulty on a different scale to others. There was also a substantial rise in the number of lone parent families who reported that they

⁶ See Irish Refugee Council “Powerless” Experiences of Direct Provision During the Covid-19 Pandemic August 2020’ (IRC 2020) <<https://bit.ly/3SKKNm3> > accessed 12 August 2022; Justin McCarthy, ‘Asylum seekers sleeping on floor at Dublin hotel’ RTE (13 June 2022) <<https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2022/0612/1304375-asylum-seeker/>> accessed 12 August 2022.

⁷ Communication received by the Children’s Rights Alliance from DCEDIY 22 November.

⁸ European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Asylum Information Database, ‘Country Report – Types of accommodation’ <<https://bit.ly/3JN6mOV> > accessed 08 August 2022.

⁹ Department of Justice, Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process (DOJ 2020) 20, 101.

¹⁰ Department of Justice and Equality, ‘Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process’ (DOJE 2020) 78.

¹¹ Laura Fletcher, People seen sleeping on floors and chairs at Citywest transit hub, RTE News, 18 July 2022.

¹² Hayley Halpin, 201 asylum seekers left without accommodation in Ireland due to ‘lack of availability’ TheJournal.ie 9 September 2022.

¹³ Joan O’Sullivan, Dublin campus ‘not able to open’ for asylum seekers tonight, RTE News 7 September 2022.

¹⁴ Information received by the Children’s Rights Alliance in December 2022.

cannot afford to keep their home sufficiently warm, one fifth of families (21.5%) compared to 7.9% in 2021.¹⁵

Housing and Homelessness: The latest updated monthly homelessness report published in October 2022 showed a record high in the number of people homeless in Ireland.¹⁶ In October 2022, there were 3,480 children in 1,601 families living in emergency homeless accommodation. Over half of these families were headed up by a single parent.¹⁷

The official statistics only give a limited view of the prevalence of homelessness in Ireland.¹⁸ They do not include families that are homeless but are accommodated in own-door accommodation or transitional housing, women and children in domestic violence refuges, asylum seekers living in emergency accommodation, or people who have been granted asylum or some other form of protection but cannot find accommodation outside the direct provision system.¹⁹

¹⁵ Central Statistics Office, Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC): Enforced Deprivation 2022 <<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silced/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilcenforceddeprivation2022/deprivationitems/>> accessed 15 December 2022.

¹⁶ Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 'Homeless Report, October 2022' (DHLGH 2022).

¹⁷ Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 'Homeless Report, October 2022' (DHLGH 2022).

¹⁸ Colette Bennett 'Rebuilding Ireland for Everyone: A review of the government's housing strategy for young and old' in Brigid Reynolds and Sean Healy (eds) *The Challenges of Success: Addressing population growth in Ireland* (Social Justice Ireland 2019).

¹⁹ Focus Ireland, 'Latest figures on homelessness in Ireland' <<https://bit.ly/35TAB1f>> accessed 12 August 2022; Colette Bennett 'Rebuilding Ireland for Everyone: A review of the government's housing strategy for young and old' in Brigid Reynolds and Sean Healy (eds) *The Challenges of Success: Addressing population growth in Ireland* (Social Justice Ireland 2019).