

# what children care about...

Issues raised by children and young people with our Office in 2007

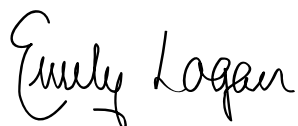


# introduction

As Ombudsman for Children, I have statutory responsibility to promote the rights and welfare of all children and young people up to the age of 18 living in Ireland. As set out in Section 7(1)(e) and Section 7(2)(a) of the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002, I have a mandate to consult with children and young people and to highlight issues relating to the rights and welfare of children that are of concern to children themselves.

Since I took up the post four years ago, my staff and I have met with thousands of children and young people and heard from thousands more. In 2007, we met with more children and young people than ever through the Big Ballot, the recruitment of a new team of young advisors, OCO visits to the five detention centres and St Patrick's Institution, school visits to our Office, as well as hearing from children and young people through our complaints and policy work. It is refreshing to witness first hand the level of understanding that children and young people have of their different experiences.

This document sets out many of the views and concerns children have raised with us in 2007.



Emily Logan  
Ombudsman for Children

# contents

<i>1. Alternative Care</i>	4
<i>2. Discrimination</i>	6
<i>3. Law</i>	8
<i>4. Language, Culture and Heritage</i>	10
<i>5. Education</i>	11
<i>6. Employment</i>	14
<i>7. Family</i>	14
<i>8. Health</i>	15
<i>9. Housing</i>	20
<i>10. Information</i>	21
<i>11. Play, Leisure and Recreation</i>	22
<i>12. Standard of Living</i>	23
<i>13. Safety and Protection</i>	24
<i>14. Voice and Being Heard</i>	25

## Issue: Alternative Care

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Residential care</b>		
▪ Placement/safety – Change in placement due to fear of assault by peers in residential centre	Safety and Protection	Young person in care
▪ Being heard – Needs and views not being taken into account in the context of care planning/review	Voice and Participation	Young person in care
▪ Contact with/access to parents and siblings	Family (Contact)	Young person in care
▪ Culture in care centre (rules/regulations)	-	Young person in care
▪ Need to improve the care system for children and young people	-	Young person in residential care
<b>Foster care</b>		
▪ Placement – Dissatisfaction with placement	-	Young person in care
▪ Being heard – Views not being taken into account in the context of care planning/review	Voice and Participation	Young person in care
▪ Professional support – Accessing professional support re: getting needs addressed (change in/lack of social worker)	-	Young person in care

<b>High support/secure care</b>		
▪ Placement – Lack of high support placement		Young person in care
▪ Support – Making transition when leaving high support/secure care		Young person in care
<b>After care</b>		
▪ Support with making transition to and in context of after care		Young person in care
<b>Issues across types/environments</b>		
▪ Actions of and/or relationships with social worker		Young person in care

## Issue: Discrimination

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Stereotyping of young people</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative stereotyping of young people by the media, some politicians and older adults</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Longford Young person, female, Dublin Young person, female, Tipperary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above + point re: negative stereotyping on superficial grounds (wearing hoodies)</li> <li>Negative stereotyping of young people by some adults, apparently arising from an intolerance and/or fear of young people</li> <li>Negative stereotyping and disrespectful attitudes/behaviours towards young people because of where they come from and/or where they live</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Dublin Young people taking part in the Big Ballot Young person, female, Laois
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disrespectful attitudes towards children and young people because of their status as children and young people, especially in/by the media</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Monaghan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to promote positive attitudes towards young people /combat negative stereotypes</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Dublin

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of treating every child and young person as a unique individual, with individual needs and wants</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Dublin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative stereotyping of adults by young people, with young people sometimes forgetting that most adults around them want to help/support them</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Cavan
<b>Discrimination re: culture, ethnicity, nationality</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negative stereotyping of people because they belong to the Traveller community</li> </ul>		Young Traveller, male, Dublin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges young people from other countries can face when it comes to settling into life in Ireland</li> </ul>		Young person, female, (originally from England)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience of being bullied by other young people due to being half-Vietnamese</li> </ul>	Health Safety and Protection Discrimination	Young person, female, Limerick

## Issue: Law

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Information and Support</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient support and information for a young person to understand what was happening in court and, now, with his case</li> </ul>	Information Voice Alternative Care	Young person in detention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people in detention not having a clear understanding of how much time they have left in detention</li> </ul>	Information Voice Alternative Care	Young people in detention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive comments about the detention school s/he is in (treatment, environment, etc)</li> </ul>		Young person in detention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and/or other services that the OCO can provide to young people who have been convicted or are on remand</li> </ul>		Young people in detention
<b>Criminality</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience of involvement in criminal activity and corresponding contact with Gardaí, against backdrop of lack of family support, educational disadvantage, living in hostel accommodation, drug addiction and alcohol use</li> </ul>	Family Alternative Care Housing Education Health	Young person in detention

Accommodation/Facilities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical views re: closed visits, living in confined space and standard of facilities</li> </ul>	Alternative Care Housing	Young people in detention
<b>An Garda Síochána</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Treatment of people, including young people, by the Gardaí in a disadvantaged area of Dublin (searching people indiscriminately)</li> </ul>	Discrimination Safety and Protection	Young, male, Dublin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people with no history of being in trouble with the Gardaí/law being moved on by the Gardaí when they are hanging out with friends in public spaces and without having done anything to provoke this action by the Gardaí</li> </ul>	Discrimination Play, Leisure & Recreation Freedom of Association	Four boys (this issue appears to be of particular concern to boys and has been brought to the OCO's attention by young people across the country)

## Issue: Language, Culture and Heritage

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Formal education</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of opportunities at school for young Travellers to learn about their own language, culture and traditions</li> </ul>	Education	Young Traveller, male, Dublin
<b>Language</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survival of the Irish language is important</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Kerry
<b>Respecting diversity</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of respecting children and young people's diverse backgrounds and origins</li> </ul>	Discrimination	Young person, male, Dublin

## Issue: Education

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Literacy</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some young people don't get the help they need with reading</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Dublin
<b>Bullying</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being bullied by other children and young people at school</li> </ul>	Safety and Protection Health	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above, with emphasis on problems at school because you are different, eg come from a different country</li> </ul>	Safety and Protection Health Discrimination	Young person, female, Laois
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate steps being taken to combat bullying in schools</li> </ul>	Safety and Protection Health	Young person, male, Mayo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of raising awareness of bullying in schools among children and young people and role that young people can play in raising awareness</li> </ul>	Health	Young person, male, Dublin
<b>School uniform</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having to wear a skirt/not being able to wear trousers because you are a girl</li> </ul>	Discrimination	Young person, female
<b>School bags</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight of school bags</li> </ul>	Health	-

Enrolment policy		
▪ Being refused a place in a school by virtue of being transgender	Discrimination Identity	-
Discrimination		
▪ School not accommodating/ respecting diversity among members of school community		-
Curriculum		
▪ Being compelled by school to take part in Religious Education	Voice	Young person, west coast of Ireland
▪ Inadequate personal, social and health education for young people	Health Information	Young person, male, Galway
Distance to school		
▪ Distance to school for separated children seeking asylum living in residential hostels	Alternative care	Separated children seeking asylum
Pressures within education		
▪ Examination stress	Health	Young person, male, Donegal
▪ Pressure placed on young people to perform well by/in their schools	Health	Young person, female, Dublin Young person, male, Dublin Young person, female, Cork

School policies/priorities		
▪ Schools are not doing enough to promote sports, activities and young people involvement in their local communities	Voice and Participation Play, Leisure and Recreation	Young person, male, Galway
Standards in education		
▪ Not all young people are being offered "a proper education" by the State	Discrimination	Young person, male, Kerry

## Issue: Employment

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Impact on education</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people are taking up employment for lack of other things to do/amenities and this is having a negative effect on their education</li> </ul>	Education	Young person, female, Meath

## Issue: Family

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Family Reunification/Residency</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent(s) of a young person not permitted to join him/her in Ireland</li> </ul>		Young person seeking asylum who had obtained status/ permission to remain in Ireland
<b>Living with Family</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of the OCO being aware of children and young people's experiences of living with their families/home life</li> </ul>	Information Voice	Young person, female, Laois
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not getting on with parents or another family member</li> </ul>	Health	Young person, female, Laois

## Issue: Health

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Nutrition</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting healthy eating among children and young people – lack of ready availability of healthy food for young people</li> </ul>		-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate packed lunches provided by hostels for separated children seeking asylum attending school</li> </ul>	Alternative care	Separated young person seeking asylum
<b>Alcohol/Drug Use</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience of drug and alcohol addiction</li> </ul>		Young people in detention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer pressure among young people (in particular at discos) to drink, smoke and/or take drugs</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Dublin Young person, female, Dublin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of more information to young people about harmful effects of drugs, alcohol and smoking and more comprehensive laws to impede children and young people's access to drugs and alcohol</li> </ul>	Information	Young person, male, Wicklow Young person, male, Mayo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widespread consumption of alcohol among young people aged 15-18 arising from a lack of places to go and alternative activities for this age group</li> </ul>	Play, Leisure and Recreation	Young person, female, Limerick Young person, female, Meath

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Levels of alcohol consumption among young people and suggestion that the OCO should “investigate” why teenagers drink and devise a strategy to reduce the number of teenage drinkers</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Wicklow
<b>Standard of health care</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not all young people get the adequate health care “they deserve”</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Kerry
<b>Mental health</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pressure arising from challenge of juggling a range of responsibilities and choices and/or from social expectations of young people</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Longford Young person, female, Wexford
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As above + corresponding negative impact on young people’s relationships with their peers and families</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Galway Young person, female, Donegal Young person, male, Kilkenny Young person, female, Sligo Young person, male, Waterford
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pressures on young people from a <i>variety</i> of sources, eg school, TV and friends</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Dublin

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Peer pressure (including what to wear, say and do) and challenge of making/maintaining friendships</li> </ul>	Discrimination Freedom of expression	Young person, male, Donegal Young person, female, Donegal Young person, female, Dublin Young person, male, Mayo Young person, male, Dublin Young person, female, Meath Young person, female, Donegal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As above + suggestion that OCO should conduct an awareness raising campaign to address the issue of peer pressure because it’s important that children and young people feel confident that they can be and express themselves without being judged.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Combating peer pressure among young people through education programmes that promote mutual respect among young people</li> </ul>	Education	Young person, female, Limerick
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need to address suicide rates among young people in Ireland</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Wexford Young person, male, Dublin

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Need for more support services (including support groups) for children and young people with mental health issues and to help them cope with stress/pressure</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Need for advocates to support young people with pressures they are experiencing, including school, sex, addictions, bullying, parents and peer pressure</b></li> </ul>		<p>Young person, female, Dublin</p> <p>Young person, female, Donegal</p> <p>Young person, female, Clare</p> <p>Young person, male, Wicklow</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Profound impact of suicide by children and young people on their local communities</b></li> </ul>		<p>Young person, female, Limerick</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Absence of support services to help young people deal with a diversity of pressures/ challenges (eg peer pressure, exam pressure, loss of loved one, parents' divorce)</b></li> </ul>		<p>Young person, male, Limerick</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Combating mental health problems and depression among children and young people</b></li> </ul>		<p>Young person, male, 15, Dublin</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Pressure of the media on young people</b></li> </ul>	Information	<p>Young person, female, Dublin</p>
<b>Bullying</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Bullying among young people</b></li> </ul>	Safety and Protection	<p>Young person, male, Donegal</p> <p>Young person, male, Mayo</p> <p>Young person, male, Kerry</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Bullying a major issue in today's society</b></li> </ul>	Safety and Protection	<p>Young person, female, Dublin</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>More information for children and young people about bullying</b></li> </ul>	Information	<p>Young person, male, Wicklow</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Growth of bullying online and inadequate steps being taken to deal with it, including by providers of online social networking sites (not implementing their policies effectively). There is a role for parents in monitoring their children's profiles on social networking sites.</b></li> </ul>	<p>Information</p> <p>Safety and Protection</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Freedom of Association</p> <p>Voice</p>	<p>Young person, male, Dublin</p>
<b>Sexual health</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>More information for young people about sexual health</b></li> </ul>		<p>Young person, female, Wexford</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Do more to promote positive sexual health among young people</b></li> </ul>		<p>Young person, female, Donegal</p>
<b>Relationships</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Do more to foster positive, cooperative relationships between young people and adults</b></li> </ul>		<p>Young person, male, Galway</p> <p>Young person, female, Cavan</p>

## Issue: Housing

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Living Conditions</b>		
▪ Inappropriate/unsuitable living conditions	Discrimination	Young Traveller
▪ Poor living conditions in residential hostels for separated children seeking asylum	Alternative care	Separated young person seeking asylum
▪ Lack of appropriate/adequate accommodation for many Travellers	Discrimination	Young Traveller, male, Dublin
▪ Inadequate accommodation for asylum seekers	Discrimination	Young Traveller, male, Dublin
<b>Planning and construction</b>		
▪ Lots of apartments have been and are being built in central Dublin, but "builders are forgetting to put things in for young people"	Play, leisure and recreation	Young person, female, Dublin

## Issue: Information

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Information re: rights/entitlements</b>		
▪ Request for information about rights/entitlement such as getting a passport		Young person in care
▪ Inadequate provision/ availability of information about rights and entitlements of separated children seeking asylum	Alternative care	Separated young people seeking asylum
<b>Awareness raising</b>		
▪ Need for OCO to promote the rights and entitlements of young people		Young people in detention
▪ As above + awareness raising by the OCO about why children's rights matter/are relevant to children and young people		Young person, male, Dublin
▪ Need to raise awareness among the public that some children are disadvantaged/do not have a good standard of living	Standard of living	Young person, male, Mayo
<b>Decision-making</b>		
▪ Information/education to support informed decision-making by children and young people	Voice and Participation	Young person, male, Galway
<b>Advertising</b>		
▪ Positive and negative influences of advertising on young people		Young person, male, Dublin

## Issue: Play, Leisure and Recreation

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Facilities in local community</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for more recreation/leisure facilities (things to do and places to go) for young people</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Dublin Young person, female, Dublin Young person, male, Monaghan Young person, male, Mayo Young person, male, Sligo Young person, male, Kerry Young person, male, Wicklow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of facilities/activities for young people living in rural areas (leading to anti-social behaviour by young people)</li> </ul>	Inequality	Young person, female, Donegal Young person, male, Waterford Young person, female, Meath
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for more playgrounds for younger children</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Dublin
<b>Facilities at school</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School playground not built yet</li> </ul>		-
<b>Inequality</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some children do not have the chance to play freely</li> </ul>	Standard of living Discrimination	Young person, male, Mayo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people whose parents/families can't afford to "pay for activities" need to play on the streets and brings its own problems</li> </ul>	Safety and Protection	Young person, female, Dublin

Benefits of facilities/activities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having facilities and activities for young people can help prevent "social problems from developing"</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Sligo

## Issue: Standard of Living

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Inequality</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some children do not have an adequate standard of living</li> </ul>	Health Housing	Young person, male, Mayo

## Issue: Safety and Protection

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Safety/protection at home</b>		
▪ Lack of adequate support services for young person in danger in the home		-
▪ Being/feeling at risk within family environment		-
<b>Decision-making</b>		
▪ Query about how a decision by a statutory body not to prosecute a person accused of child abuse could be in the public interest	Information	Query from young person following separation of his/her parents
<b>Feeling safe</b>		
▪ It's important for young people to feel safe		Young person, female, Dublin Young person, male, Meath
<b>Safety in the community</b>		
▪ Living in an unsafe ("rough") community		Young person, male, Dublin
▪ Roads are dangerous for children and young people		Young person, male, Sligo
▪ Supporting young people involved in anti-social behaviour to understand the negative impact of their actions on other people living in their communities, including elderly people		Young person, female, Limerick

## Issue: Voice and Being Heard

Details	Related Issues (if any)	Information re: Children and Young People
<b>Court proceedings</b>		
▪ Child not having a voice in the context of court (family law) proceedings affecting him/her	Children/Law	-
▪ Child upset because she feels that no-one is taking her opinions seriously in the context of court proceedings relating to parents' separation	Children/Law Children/Family	-
<b>Family/Parent separation</b>		
▪ Query about whether children have a right not to have contact with a parent if they do not wish to do so	Children/Law Children/Family	Young person who did not want to have contact with one of his/her parents following parents' separation
▪ Child whose mother is not allowing her to see her father and the child's corresponding feeling/experience that her views/wishes are not being taken into account	Children/Family Children/Law	-

Being Heard		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people (in care) not being heard by adults and concern that some adults think children and young people have no ideas/thoughts</li> </ul>	Alternative Care	Young people in residential care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people can feel “voiceless” in society because they have “no say and can’t vote”</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Kerry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people are more interested in issues affecting them and in having their views heard on these issues than “some people give us credit for”</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Limerick
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above, with examples of climate change and the age of consent given</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Wicklow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for OCO to know about the “minor issues” facing young people as well as more significant issues</li> </ul>	Information	Young person, female, Sligo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of OCO promoting ways of supporting young people to be heard in Irish society and the importance of taking children and young people’s views seriously</li> </ul>		Young person, male, Dublin Young person, female, Kildare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of all young people having a voice and being heard re: decisions, etc affecting them</li> </ul>	Discrimination	Young person, female, Dublin Young person, female, Dublin

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of OCO listening to children and young people, knowing what their views/concerns are and finding out how they think their needs can be addressed effectively</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Cork
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above + importance of OCO taking an inclusive approach to hearing children and young people voices (ie not focusing on “a particular race or class” to the exclusion of others) and acting as a conduit for channelling children’s and young people’s views to legislators and others about how children’s rights issues should be addressed</li> </ul>		Young person, female, Longford
		Young person, female, Cork
		Young person, female, Dublin
		Young person, male, Galway
		Young person, male, Dublin
		Young person, male, Dublin
		Young person, male, Meath
		Young person, female, Wicklow
		Young person, female, Tipperary
		Young person, female, Dublin
		Young person, female, Dublin
		Young person, male, Dublin



