

TUNE IN

Raising Awareness of Children's Rights among Children and Young People

A Consultation with Children and Young
People by the Ombudsman for Children
September — November 2016

Resource Materials
for Youthreach

Contents

Introductory Information

- Letter to Youthreach Coordinators and Educators from the Ombudsman for Children 3
- How to use these Resource Materials – Information for Educators 4
- Letter to Parents/Guardians from the Ombudsman for Children 6

Fact Files for Educators

- Fact File: Ombudsman for Children's Office 7
- Fact File: Bunreacht na hÉireann – Constitution of Ireland 9
- Fact File: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 10

Activity 1:
Meet the Ombudsman for Children 12

Activity 2:
Rights through the Day 17

Activity 3:
Your Rights, Your Ideas 23

Feedback Sheet to return to the OCO 29

Dear Youthreach Coordinator and Educator



I am delighted that you are in a position to support some of the young people you work with to take part in our *Tune In* consultation. I really appreciate and would like to thank you most sincerely for your assistance.

My roles as Ombudsman for Children are set out in the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002. Among my obligations under this Act is to promote awareness of children's rights and welfare, including among children and young people and including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

One of my priorities for the next three years is to implement initiatives to strengthen awareness and understanding of children's rights, including among children and young people. My team and I feel it is vital that our work to build on the OCO's activities in this area to date is informed by the views and ideas of children and young people themselves.

We have developed these resource materials to support your work to enable young people to form and express their views and ideas on good ways for my team and I to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights among children and young people.

These materials include three activities. The first activity aims to introduce young people to my work as Ombudsman for Children so that they are aware of who is seeking to hear and learn from their ideas. The second activity introduces young people to children's rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The third activity focuses on supporting participating young people to share their ideas on how we might approach our future work to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights among children and young people.

We appreciate that you are very busy with the many responsibilities you have in your work. We have developed the materials, so that you can focus solely on Activity 3 if necessary. We are also aware that you may need or wish to adapt the activities to take account of the ages, capacities and learning preferences of the young people you work with. We would encourage you to adapt the activities as necessary and hope that the information provided in these resource materials will support you in this regard.

We would be grateful if you could return the feedback sheet documenting the young people's main ideas to us no later than 30th November 2016. Once we have compiled and considered the results of our *Tune In* consultation, we will share the results with you and the young people who took part. We hope to contact you with the results by the end of January 2017.

If you have any queries in relation to this consultation that we can help with, please contact us at consultation@oco.ie or on (01) 8656800.

Many thanks again for your assistance and support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Niall Muldoon". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Niall Muldoon
Ombudsman for Children
September 2016

How to use these Resource Materials – Information for Educators

The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) has developed these resource materials to assist educators who are facilitating young people to take part in our *Tune In* consultation. The following information may be helpful as a guide to using the materials:

Letter to Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians of the young people taking part in the *Tune In* consultation may welcome information about it. We have included a letter to parents/guardians from the Ombudsman for Children, Niall Muldoon, which provides information about the consultation and how it links to the OCO's work. You might like to give each participating young person a copy of this letter to give to their parent/guardian.

Posters and Fact Files for Educators

These materials are accompanied by posters about the OCO and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). There are also three Fact Files, which provide you with background information about:

- the Ombudsman for Children's Office;
- the Constitution of Ireland;
- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Please email the OCO at consultation@oco.ie if you would like us to post a hard copy of the two posters to you.

The Activities

The materials include three activities:

- **Activity 1** aims to introduce young people to the Ombudsman for Children and the OCO's work so that young people taking part in the *Tune In* consultation are aware of who is seeking their views and ideas.
- **Activity 2** aims to introduce young people to children's rights and to make connections between children's rights under the UNCRC and their own daily lives.
- **Activity 3** is the main activity for the *Tune In* consultation. It focuses on supporting young people to share their ideas on how the OCO might approach its future work to raise awareness of children's rights among children and young people.

Feedback Sheet to return to the OCO

A feedback sheet is provided to facilitate recording of the main ideas shared by the young people. If more than one group in your Youthreach centre is taking part in the consultation, please complete and return a separate feedback sheet for each group that is taking part in the consultation. **Please return the completed feedback sheet(s) to the OCO no later than 30th November 2016** and to the following address: **Ombudsman for Children's Office, Millennium House, 52–56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1.**

Adapting the Activities

From our experience of working with children and young people in the context of our own education programme, we understand that one size never fits all. As such, you may need to adapt the activities to take account of the learning preferences of the young people you work with. If you need, or wish, to adapt the activities, we hope the posters, fact files and information provided under each activity will be of assistance. Each activity also includes some suggestions for how it can be adapted or extended.

Activity 3

We appreciate that educators are very busy and that the time available for you to facilitate young people to take part in this consultation is limited. **For the purposes of the consultation itself, the key activity in this resource is Activity 3.** If you do not have time to do all three activities and/or the young people are already sufficiently familiar with children's rights and aware of the OCO's work, you might like to focus solely on Activity 3 and to use the information provided in these materials to introduce the activity by:

- briefly explaining who the Ombudsman for Children is and what the OCO does;
- ensuring that the young people understand what 'rights' are;
- clarifying what the UNCRC is, what rights children have under the UNCRC, and that Ireland has made a commitment to respect, protect and realise these rights for children and young people under 18 living in Ireland.

Dear Parent or Guardian



I am writing to you because your child's Youthreach Centre is supporting your child and other young people to take part in a consultation that I and my team at the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) are doing.

The consultation is called *Tune In*. It is about finding out what children and young people around the country think would be good ways for us to raise awareness of children's rights among children and young people into the future.

As Ombudsman for Children, I have two main roles, which are set down in a law called the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002. These roles are: to promote the rights and welfare of children and young people under 18 years old living in Ireland, and to deal with complaints made by or for children and young people about the actions of public organisations.

In my work to promote children's rights and welfare, I am required by law to promote awareness of matters relating to children's rights, including among children and young people and including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

One of my priorities over the next three years is to build on the OCO's work in this area to date. We are doing the *Tune In* consultation because my team and I would like our future work to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights among children and young people to be informed by the ideas of children and young people themselves.

People often ask us where children's rights are defined. There are two main reference points as regards children's rights in Ireland: the Constitution of Ireland, which is the primary legal instrument in Ireland, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is an international agreement on children's rights that Ireland signed up to in 1992.

Building awareness and understanding of what it means for children to have rights and what their rights are is an important part of the OCO's work to ensure that children are respected, treated fairly and can experience their rights as they are growing up.

As an Office, we deal with complaints about how the State provides services to children. Through investigating complaints, we have seen how lack of awareness and consideration of children's rights can have damaging effects on the lives of children and their families. We have seen public organisations making decisions and applying rules in ways that are not always in the best interests of children. And we have found that children are not consistently given the chance to express their views when decisions are being made that affect them.

From our work, we know that parents are the strongest advocates for their children's rights. The vast majority of the 12,000 complaints that the OCO has handled to date have been made by parents on behalf of their children. Through this and other work we do, we are also aware of the many different ways in which parents, families and professionals throughout the country are protecting the rights of children every day, sometimes under very challenging circumstances.

If you would like to know more about our work or if you have any questions we may be able to help with, please visit our website at www.oco.ie, email us at oco@oco.ie or phone us on **(01) 865 6800**.

Yours sincerely

Niall Muldoon
Ombudsman for Children

Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO)



- Following an open recruitment process in which children and young people played an important role, Niall Muldoon was appointed Ireland's Ombudsman for Children by President Michael D Higgins in February 2015.
-  The word 'Ombudsman' comes from Scandinavia. The 'Ombuds' part of the word can be understood as 'defender' of rights and the 'man' part refers to mankind. The role of an Ombudsman is to safeguard the interests of individuals or groups by holding public organisations to account for their actions and decisions. In the case of the Ombudsman for Children in Ireland, the beneficiaries of his/her work are children and young people under 18 years of age living in Ireland.
- The Ombudsman for Children's Office ('OCO') was set up in 2004 under a law called the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002 ('2002 Act'). Under this law, the Ombudsman for Children has two main roles:
 - 1 to promote the rights and welfare of children and young people under 18 years old living in Ireland;
 - 2 to deal with complaints made by or for children and young people about the actions of public organisations.
- The 2002 Act requires the Ombudsman for Children to be independent in his/her work to fulfil these two roles. As Ombudsman for Children, Niall Muldoon is directly accountable to the Oireachtas for the OCO's work to implement these roles.

• Promoting children's rights and welfare

In its role to promote children's rights and welfare, the OCO is obliged by law to do a number of things. They include:

- raising public awareness of children's rights and welfare, including among children and young people and including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- consulting with children and young people and highlighting issues relating to children's rights and welfare that children are concerned about to Government and to other people who make decisions that affect children and young people;
- giving advice to the Government on any matter relating to children's rights and welfare, including developments in law and public policy; and
- encouraging public organisations to work in ways that promote children's rights and welfare.

The OCO can also carry out, commission or publish research on any matter relating to children's rights and welfare.

- **Dealing with complaints**

As regards the OCO's complaints-handling role:

- Complaints can be made to the OCO by or on behalf of children and young people.
 - The OCO can investigate complaints about certain actions ('administrative actions') of public organisations that have had, or may have had, a negative impact on a child.
 - Public organisations that the OCO can deal with complaints about include government departments, state agencies, healthcare services, schools, social work services and local authorities.
 - The OCO's complaints-handling service is a free service.
 - When investigating complaints, the OCO is independent. It is also impartial, acting neither as an advocate for the child nor as an adversary of the public organisation complained about.
 - When dealing with complaints, the OCO is obliged to consider the best interests of the child. The OCO must also consider the wishes of the child, in so far as this is possible and taking into account the child's age and understanding.
 - As an ombudsman office, the OCO is intended to be a place of last resort for complaints. Accordingly, the OCO respects local complaints procedures. It also promotes the local resolution of complaints.
 - Since the OCO was set up in 2004, it has received over 12,000 complaints.
 - A significant majority of the complaints that the OCO receives each year are made by parents on behalf of their children. Complaints are also made by children's relatives, professionals (e.g. principals, teachers, social workers, youth workers, healthcare professionals) and by young people themselves.
 - The complaints brought to the OCO relate to a wide range of issues affecting children, including issues arising in the areas of education, child protection, alternative care, family support, childcare, healthcare, housing and justice.
 - Following an investigation of a complaint, the OCO may make recommendations to the public organisation concerned. While these recommendations are not binding, the OCO's experience of investigating complaints indicates that public organisations are generally open to working with the recommendations the OCO makes.
- More information about the OCO and its different areas of work is available on the OCO's website, www.oco.ie

Bunreacht na hÉireann – Constitution of Ireland

- Bunreacht na hÉireann is the Irish Constitution. Enacted in 1937, the Constitution is the fundamental legal instrument in Ireland. It sets out how Ireland should be governed and the rights of Irish citizens.
- The Constitution establishes and describes the main institutions of the Irish State. The power to run the State is divided into three separate powers, the legislative power, the executive power and the judicial power:
 - The Constitution gives legislative power (the power to make, amend and remove laws) to the Oireachtas, which comprises Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann and the President.
 - The executive power (the power to put laws into effect) rests with the Government, assisted by the gardaí, the defence forces and the civil service.
 - The judicial power (the power to interpret and apply the law to conflicts between the State and the individual as well as disputes between individuals) lies with the courts.
- The Constitution also sets out the fundamental rights that every Irish citizen is entitled to. They include the right to equality before the law, the right to personal liberty, the right to religious liberty, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to privacy.
- Among the articles of the Constitution that concern children are Articles 41 and 42. Article 41 relates to the family and recognises the family as having a special place in society. Article 42 of the Constitution concerns education. It acknowledges the family as the “primary and natural educator of the child” and defines the State’s role in relation to education.
- If the Government wishes to amend the Constitution, it must hold a referendum as any decision to change the Constitution rests with citizens of Ireland. If the majority of votes cast in a referendum are in favour of the proposed change, the Bill containing the proposed amendment is signed by the Irish President and the Constitution is then amended.
- On 10 November 2012, a referendum was held to insert a new article relating to children and their rights into the Constitution. The proposed amendment was supported by a majority of voters who voted in this referendum. The Thirty-First Amendment of the Constitution (Children) Act 2012 was signed into law on 28 April 2015.
- Article 42A of the Constitution is called ‘Children’. It says that the State “recognises and affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children” and that the State must, in as far as practicable, protect and vindicate those rights by its laws (42A.1). Among the matters addressed by Article 42A are:
 - the role of the State in circumstances where parents “fail in their duty towards their children to such extent that the safety and welfare of their children is likely to be prejudicially affected” (42A.2.1);
 - making provision in law for the adoption of children, including in circumstances where the parents of a child “have failed ... in their duty towards the child” for a period of time set down in law and where this is in the best interests of the child (42A.2.2) as well as the voluntary placement for adoption and the adoption of any child (42A.3);
 - making provision in law for the best interests of the child to be treated as “the paramount consideration” and, in as far as practicable, for the views of the child to be ascertained and given due weight, in accordance with the child’s age and maturity, in care proceedings and in proceedings regarding adoption, guardianship, custody or access (42A.4.1° and 42A.4.2°).

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ('UNCRC') was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. Providing the most comprehensive definition of children's rights to date, this Convention has been ratified by almost every country in the world. Ireland ratified the UNCRC in 1992. Having done so, Ireland has an obligation under international law to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children set out in the Convention. International treaties like the UNCRC do not become part of Irish law unless they are incorporated by the Oireachtas. To date, certain principles of the Convention have been partially incorporated into Irish law in a number of areas affecting children.
- Defining a child as a "human being below the age of 18 years", the UNCRC recognises children as rights-holders who are entitled to special care, assistance and protection due their age and stage of development.
- The Preamble to the UNCRC clarifies that realising children's rights is about:
 - respecting children's inherent dignity and worth;
 - promoting improved living conditions and a better quality of life for children;
 - protecting and assisting the family as the "fundamental group of society" and the "natural environment for the growth and well-being" of children;
 - acknowledging that children "should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding";
 - supporting children to respect principles of "peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity";
 - recognising that there are children throughout the world who need special protection because they live in exceptionally difficult circumstances.
- The UNCRC defines what rights children have. In doing so, the Convention promotes a holistic view of children's lives and needs: the rights set out in the UNCRC are to be understood as interdependent and as being of equal importance.
- Four rights in the UNCRC are considered vital to realising other Convention rights. Known as the Convention's 'general principles', they are:
 - children's right not to be discriminated against on any grounds (Article 2);
 - children's right to have their best interests treated as a primary consideration in all decisions and actions affecting them (Article 3);
 - children's right to life, survival and development (Article 6);
 - children's right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken into account, in accordance with their age and maturity (Article 12).
- The UNCRC places an obligation on the State to undertake all appropriate measures to implement the rights of children recognised in the Convention (Article 4). Among the State's obligations in this regard are to respect parents' rights and to support parents to fulfil their roles and responsibilities towards their children.

- An international panel of experts on children’s rights called the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is responsible for periodically monitoring and assessing the progress being made by States, including Ireland, to fulfil their obligations to children under the Convention. Having ratified the UNCRC in 1992, Ireland appeared before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1998 and again in 2006. Ireland’s third appearance before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child was in January 2016. Following this meeting, the UN Committee published its observations on Ireland’s progress and recommendations on steps for Ireland to take in the coming years to further respect, protect and fulfil children’s rights. Ireland is due to submit its next periodic report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2021.

- **Further information:**

- If you would like to facilitate the young people you work with to explore children’s rights under the UNCRC in more detail, the OCO’s *It’s Your Right* website – www.itsyourright.ie – can assist you. It provides information and perspectives on children’s rights in a variety of formats (text, image, audio, video) as well as links to a range of other websites and educational resource materials that may support your work to examine one or more issues relating to children’s rights with young people.
- The full text of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is available at www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx
- A summary of the UNCRC is available on the OCO’s website at www.oco.ie/education-and-human-rights/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/
- If you would like to find out more about the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the process to monitor the progress of States, including Ireland, to fulfil their obligations to children under the UNCRC, go to www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx
- To view the UN Committee’s concluding observations and recommendations in relation to Ireland, which were published in early 2016, go to documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/039/97/PDF/G1603997.pdf?OpenElement

Activity 1 Meet the Ombudsman for Children

Purpose

- To raise young people's awareness of the Ombudsman for Children and the work that the Ombudsman for Children's Office in Ireland does
- To make sure young people understand who the Ombudsman for Children is and, as such, who is seeking to hear their views in the context of the OCO's *Tune In* consultation

You will need

- A board or flipchart to note suggestions from the young people
- A copy of the *Letter from the Ombudsman for Children* for each young person
- A copy of the *Ombudsman for Children Quiz Sheet* for each small group of young people
- Paper and pens/pencils to enable young people to jot down answers to the quiz questions
- A copy of the poster about the OCO to display

You may wish to have the Fact File about the Ombudsman for Children's Office to hand for your own reference during the activity, as necessary.

Steps

Start by:

- 1 Ask the young people to give examples of people whose job involves working with or for children and young people (e.g. teacher, youth worker, doctor, etc). Note their suggestions on a board/flipchart.
- 2 Explain that there is a job called the 'Ombudsman for Children' and that Niall Muldoon is the current Ombudsman for Children in Ireland. Find out whether or not the young people have heard of the Ombudsman for Children or the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) before. Explain that the work of the Ombudsman for Children and the OCO has to do with the rights and welfare of children and young people under 18 years old living in Ireland. Ask the young people the following questions and write up their suggestions on the board/flipchart:
 - What do you think the Ombudsman for Children and the OCO might do?
 - What kinds of issues or problems do you think the Ombudsman for Children and the OCO might hear about and deal with?

Develop by:

- 3 Give each young person a copy of Niall Muldoon's letter. Ask them to read Niall's letter through. Alternatively, read out the letter to the young people. As necessary, explain any words in Niall's letter that may be unfamiliar to the young people.
- 4 Divide the young people into small groups. Give each group a copy of the *Quiz Sheet* provided and facilitate a quiz based on Niall's letter. Clarify the answers to the quiz questions with the young people.

Finish by:

- 5 Once you have clarified the answers to the quiz questions with the young people, go back to their original suggestions about what the Ombudsman for Children does and the issues or problems the OCO deals with. What do their suggestions have in common with what Niall has said about his job? What is different?
- 6 Display the poster about the OCO. You can use it to remind the young people about the OCO's work when you are supporting them to express their views as part of the *Tune In* consultation.

Suggestions for adapting this activity

- If you do not have time to facilitate the quiz based on Niall's letter, you might ask your group some of the quiz questions orally and invite them to suggest answers orally.
- As an alternative to Niall's letter, you might show the young people the short video (3:00 minutes) on the OCO's *It's Your Right* website where Niall talks about his appointment as Ombudsman for Children and ask the young people questions based on this video. The video, which is in English, is available at www.itsyourright.ie/who-we-are/

Suggestions for extending this activity

- You might like to show the young people the OCO's video *My Life Is Now* (5:30 minutes), which provides a case study of a complaint that the OCO has dealt with. The video is available at www.oco.ie/education-and-human-rights/special-projects/tune-in/
- Depending on the time you wish to give to facilitating the young people to learn about the OCO's work, ask them to visit the OCO's website and to find out three additional facts about the OCO's work to feed back to the whole group. Taken together, the information the young people gather could form the basis for a whole group collage or poster that complements the OCO's own poster about its work.

Quiz questions and answers, for your own reference:

1 Who made Niall Muldoon Ombudsman for Children and when?

The President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, made Niall Muldoon Ombudsman for Children in February 2015.

2 What job did Niall have for almost 20 years before he became Ombudsman for Children?

Niall was a psychologist.

3 Name one thing that Niall learned from the work he did before he became Ombudsman for Children.

Any one of the following three answers to this question is correct:

- Children and young people are not always respected or treated well.
- Children and young people can get through huge difficulties in their lives, through their own courage and when they get the right support.
- It is important to listen to children and young people when you need to figure out what will work well for them.

4 There is a law that says what Niall has to do in his job as Ombudsman for Children. What is the law called?

Ombudsman for Children Act 2002

5 Name one thing that Niall and the team at the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) do to help make sure that children's rights are respected.

Any one of the following three answers to this question is correct:

- Finding out what young people's opinions are on different issues
- Supporting people to know about children's rights
- Giving advice to the Government and other people to help make sure laws and plans affecting children and young people work well for children and young people and respect their rights

6 How many complaints has the OCO dealt with since it was set up in 2004?

Over 12,000 complaints

7 Which group of people makes most of the complaints that the OCO deals with?

Children and young people's parents

8 Give two examples of things that people complain to the OCO about.

Any two of the following is a correct answer to this question:

- healthcare
- education
- housing
- protection of children

9 The OCO has to be independent in all its work. What else does the OCO need to be when it is dealing with complaints?

The OCO needs to be fair.

10 How long can Niall Muldoon be the Ombudsman for Children for?

6 years, and possibly for another 6 years after that. (up to 12 years in total)

Hello

My name is Niall Muldoon and I am the Ombudsman for Children in Ireland.

President Michael D Higgins made me Ombudsman for Children in February 2015. I am very honoured that I was chosen to do this important job. I am especially delighted that the children and young people who interviewed me as part of the selection process felt I was worthy of being Ombudsman for Children.



I always wanted to work with children. Before I got this job, I worked for almost 20 years as a psychologist. Much of my work was with children and about the protection of children from harm. From this and other work I have done, I have seen how children and young people are not always respected or treated well. I understand that children and young people can get through huge difficulties in their lives, through their own courage and when they get the right support. And I have learned how important it is to listen to children and young people when you need to figure out what will work well for them.

As Ombudsman for Children, my job is about helping to make sure that children's rights are respected and made real for every child and young person under 18 years old living in Ireland.

A law called the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002 says what work I and my team have to do. Our work includes:

- finding out what children and young people's opinions are on different issues
- supporting people, including children and young people, to know about children's rights, and
- giving advice to the Government and other people to help make sure laws and plans affecting children and young people work well for you and respect your rights.

Another important part of our work is about dealing with complaints. Children and young people can make a complaint to us, or an adult can make a complaint for them. We have dealt with over 12,000 complaints since the Ombudsman for Children's Office was set up in 2004 and most complaints we get are from children and young people's parents.

People can make a complaint to us if they think that a public organisation (like a hospital, social work service or school) has done something that is unfair and has had a bad effect on a child. The complaints we deal with have to do with lots of different things, including healthcare, education, housing and the protection of children.

When we look into a complaint, we have to be independent. We also have to be fair and make sure we understand both sides of the story. This means we need to listen very carefully to what the different people involved have to say. Then we can make suggestions about what can be done to sort out the problem.

I can be the Ombudsman for Children for six years, and possibly for another six years after that. During this time, I and my team will keep working very hard to do what we can to help make Ireland a better place for children and young people. It's not easy, but I feel really lucky to have this job and it's great to meet and learn from children and young people as I do my work.

I hope I have given you a good idea of what my job and the OCO's work is all about.

Bye for now and take care,

Niall Muldoon
Ombudsman for Children

Ombudsman for Children Quiz Sheet



- 1 Who made Niall Muldoon Ombudsman for Children and when?
- 2 What job did Niall have for almost 20 years before he became Ombudsman for Children?
- 3 Name one thing that Niall learned from the work he did before he became Ombudsman for Children.
- 4 There is a law that says what Niall has to do in his job as Ombudsman for Children. What is the law called?
- 5 Name one thing that Niall and the team at the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) do to help make sure that children's rights are respected.
- 6 How many complaints has the OCO dealt with since it was set up in 2004?
- 7 Which group of people makes most of the complaints that the OCO deals with?
- 8 Give two examples of things that people complain to the OCO about.
- 9 The OCO has to be independent in all its work. What else does the OCO need to be when it is dealing with complaints?
- 10 How long can Niall Muldoon be the Ombudsman for Children for?

Activity 2 Rights through the Day

Purpose

- To introduce young people to children's rights and to support them to make connections between their rights, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and their own daily lives

You will need

- A board or flipchart to note suggestions from the young people
- A copy of the *Rights through the Day* activity sheet and of the *Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* sheet for each small group of young people
- Pens/pencils for young people to fill out the activity sheet in their small groups
- A copy of the poster illustrating children's rights under the UNCRC, to display

You may wish to have the Fact Files about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Constitution of Ireland to hand for your own reference during the activity, as necessary and appropriate.

Steps

Start by:

- 1 Taking into account any work you may previously have done with the young people in relation to human rights and/or children's rights, briefly:
 - Ask the young people what they think 'rights' are and clarify the concept with them, as necessary.¹
 - Follow up by asking the young people to suggest what rights they think children and young people might have and to give reasons for their suggestions.
 - Introduce the young people to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. (While this activity focuses on children's rights under the UNCRC, you may also wish to briefly introduce the young people to Ireland's Constitution.)

Develop by:

- 2 Divide the young people into small groups. Give each group a copy of the *Rights through the Day* activity sheet. Ask the young people to work together in their groups to diary a regular day by making a list of activities in the first column on the activity sheet. Starting with when they wake up in the morning and finishing with when they go to bed at night, they should do this by briefly listing about five different things they do during the morning, five things they do in the afternoon and five things they do in the evening (e.g. "get dressed", "have breakfast", "brush my teeth", "go to Youthreach", etc.). If they are making a diary for a day at Youthreach, encourage the young people to think about what they do in Youthreach, i.e. to include some of the subjects they do, break times, etc.

¹ There are different ways in which the concept of 'rights' can be defined with and for children and young people. Depending on the ages and capacities of the young people you work with, you may wish to clarify what 'rights' are in one or more of the following ways: things that people are entitled to; legitimate claims that people can make; things that people should have and be able to do; things that people need to survive, to thrive (develop their potential), to be safe, and to actively participate in society.

- 3 When they have completed their diary in column one, give each group a copy of the *Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* sheet. Ask each group to use this summary to make a connection between each activity they have listed and one right that children and young people have under the UNCRC (e.g. “get dressed” – the right to clothing, “have breakfast” - the right to food; etc.) Encourage the young people to think creatively and to work towards generating a list of rights in the second column, which includes as many different rights as possible. For example, instead of connecting breakfast, lunch and dinner with the right to food, they might consider where they are and who they are with at different mealtimes and, with that, identify other rights that might come into play at these times.
- 4 While the young people are working in their groups, do a mock-up of the *Rights through the Day* activity sheet on the board/ flipchart. When the young people have completed their activity sheets, invite each small group to feed back two or three examples of activities they included in their diary and corresponding connections they made between each of these activities and a right children have under the UNCRC. The first group should give examples of activities they do first thing in the morning so that, as you invite and record feedback from each group, you are creating a composite diary on the board/flipchart, which lists activities that the young people might do during the day and rights connected with these activities.

Finish by:

- 5 To wrap up the activity, suggest to the young people that children’s rights are things that every child and young person should be able to experience as a reality in their daily lives. Explain that, by naming what rights children and young people have and encouraging countries (States) like Ireland to make a commitment to respect, protect and realise these rights, international agreements like the UNCRC provide countries (States) with goals to work towards achieving.

(If you have referenced Ireland’s Constitution during your introduction to this activity, you might also suggest to the young people that, when it comes to Ireland’s national laws (starting with the Constitution), these laws can also name rights that people (including children and young people) have and can place obligations on the Irish State to respect, protect and realise these rights.)

Suggestions for adapting the activity

- Instead of young people working in small groups on the Rights through the Day activity:
 - You could ask them to complete this activity individually or in pairs.
 - or*
 - You could facilitate the young people to complete the activity as a whole group brainstorm, where you first note their suggestions for day-to-day activities on the board / flipchart and then note the connections they propose between each activity and children's rights under the UNCRC.

Suggestions for extending the activity

- When you have completed the Rights through the Day activity, you might like to facilitate a follow-up discussion with the young people. Questions that could provide a focus for the discussion include:
 - Are they surprised at how many different rights come into play during a normal day in their lives? Why/why not?
 - Are they surprised that any of the rights they have under the UNCRC have been identified as rights of children and young people? If so, why?
 - Who do they think has a role to play in helping to make sure that different rights they have identified in their diaries are a reality in their daily lives and/or the lives of other children and young people living in Ireland? What, if any, role can young people themselves play in this regard? With reference to one or more specific rights, can they give concrete examples of what the people they have identified do to help ensure these rights are respected?
- Ask the young people to work individually, in pairs or in small groups to identify a right that they think is particularly important and to come up with a short message which explains why they think it is so important. As appropriate, you might ask them to create their respective messages as a poster, a postcard or a social media post (e.g. a tweet, a facebook post, an instagram image/photo or as a snapchat snap). You might then create a display of their messages. Before they create their own messages, you could ask the young people to explore the OCO's *It's Your Right* website (www.itsyourright.ie) and, in particular, to look and listen to what other children and young people have to say about what different children's rights under the UNCRC mean to them.
- Using the icons of different children's rights on the UNCRC poster provided as a starting point, ask the young people to work individually, in pairs or in small groups to create their own icon of a right children have under the UNCRC, which they think is particularly important. Create a display of all of the icons they create.

Rights through the Day

Sample Sheet for Educators



Rights through the Day



	Activities	Rights
Morning	Brush teeth have breakfast get dressed have a shower	clean water Food Clothes clean water
Afternoon	Play Socialize lunch Reading	Play + Rest Friends Food education
Evening	Watch T.V Dinner get ready for bed. Spend time with family.	getting information Food Clothes Family and care



Rights through the Day

	Activities	Rights
Morning 		
Afternoon 		
Evening 		

Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement that lists the rights that every child and young person under the age of 18 has. All children and young people should be able to experience these rights as they are growing up. These rights include:

- being treated equally and fairly
- healthy food
- healthcare
- a nationality
- privacy
- education
- getting information and being protected from harmful information
- people making decisions based on what's best for you
- a name
- rest and play/recreation
- being safe from harm
- respect for your language, culture and religion
- a home
- clothes
- having a say when decisions are being made that affect you
- family and care
- clean water
- being protected from work that harms or exploits you
- knowing your rights and responsibilities

Activity 3 Your Rights, Your Ideas

Purpose

- To facilitate young people to discuss, identify and agree on good ways to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights among young people
- To enable young people to share their ideas with the Ombudsman for Children and inform the OCO's work to raise awareness of children's rights among children and young people into the future

You will need

- Four copies of the *Your Rights, Your Ideas* activity sheet, one for each small group of young people
- Pens/pencils and paper to enable young people to jot down their initial ideas before they write their agreed shortlist of ideas into the relevant section of the *Your Rights, Your Ideas* activity sheet
- A board/flipchart to note young people's ideas on
- A copy of the *Feedback Sheet to return to the OCO* to write the young people's final ideas on and complete before returning it to the OCO
- Optional: One copy of the sheet of images illustrating the OCO's work to raise awareness of children's rights for each young person or to share among young people in pairs or small groups

You might like to have the Fact Files and posters about the OCO and the UNCRC to hand for your own reference during the activity, as necessary.

Steps

Start by:

- 1 Before dividing the young people into small groups and giving each group a copy of the *Your Rights, Your Ideas* activity sheet, build on the work you have done to introduce young people to the Ombudsman for Children and to children's rights by explaining the following:
 - Among the rights that children and young people have under the UNCRC is the right to know what their rights are.
 - The Ombudsman for Children Act 2002 says that one of the things the Ombudsman for Children and the OCO must do is raise awareness of children's rights, including among children and young people and including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 2 Give the young people some examples of how the OCO currently does this work. If you wish, use the sheet of images provided as a reference point in this regard. Examples include:
 - The OCO holds workshops for groups of children and young people visiting its office in Dublin.
 - Whenever possible, the Ombudsman for Children and the OCO team visit children and young people in their schools and meet children and young people through different clubs, projects and initiatives they are involved in.
 - The OCO has a website called *It's Your Right*, which uses different media (images, words, audio, video) to raise awareness of children's rights among children and young people.
 - The OCO has created and sent materials to schools so that children and young people can learn more about children's rights in school, with the support of their teachers.

- 3 Explain that the Ombudsman for Children would really like to hear their ideas on good ways for the OCO to raise children and young people's awareness and understanding of children's rights into the future. Check in with the young people to see if they are willing to share their ideas on this topic with the Ombudsman for Children and the OCO.
- 4 If the young people are willing to share their ideas, introduce the four questions to them. Invite the young people to suggest a couple of possible responses to each of the four questions:
 - **Where** would you like to get information about children's rights?
(e.g. school, youth project, website, at the OCO, on social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram))
 - **Who** would you trust and be happy to give you information about children's rights?
(e.g. parent, teacher, youth worker, friend, the OCO)
 - **What** kinds of information are you interested in getting about children's rights?
(e.g. facts, stories, case studies, other children and young people's views, information about organisations working on children's rights)
 - **How** would you like information about children's rights to be presented?
(e.g. in writing, images/photos, audio clips, video clips, a mix of different media)

Develop by:

- 5 Divide the young people into four groups. Give each group a copy of the *Your Rights, Your Ideas* activity sheet. Allocate one question on the activity sheet per group.
- 6 Ask the young people to work together in their small groups to:
 - brainstorm ideas in response to the question they have been given, jotting down each idea and one reason why each idea might be a good idea as they go;
 - review all their ideas and reasons for why these might be good ideas;
 - discuss, agree on and make a shortlist of up to five ideas;
 - write down their top ideas (using key words) in the box relating to their question on the *Your Rights, Your Ideas* activity sheet.

Explain that you will be asking each group to feed back their agreed shortlist of ideas and the reasons for these ideas to the rest of the class.

Ground rules

Before the young people get started, you might like to introduce some ground rules to encourage them to work together in an inclusive, collaborative way in their small groups. For example:

- We will respect and cooperate with each other in our group.
 - There are no right or wrong answers to the questions – just ideas.
 - We will make sure everyone in our group has a fair and equal chance to say what they think.
 - We will take everyone's ideas into account.
 - We will only include an idea on our shortlist if we all agree on it and on a reason why we agree it is a good idea.
-

- 7 Check in with each group of young people as they are working together to see how they are getting on. Provide further clarification and/or support, as necessary.
- 8 Bring the young people back together as a whole group. Invite each small group to share with the rest of the group what question they had, what ideas they agreed on and why. Note the shortlist of top ideas from each group on a board/flipchart.
- 9 Explain that, once finalised, the ideas on the board/flipchart will be the ideas that the group will submit to the Ombudsman for Children. Facilitate the group to review the ideas on the board/flipchart in response to each question. In particular, support the group to discuss whether the ideas connect well to one another and to propose and agree on any adjustments that may be needed. For example:
 - If one group of young people identified Youthreach as one of the places where they would like to get information about children's rights, did another group identify Youthreach educators as a group of people they would trust and be happy to give them information about children's rights? If not, would the group now like to add Youthreach educators to the list of people who they would trust and be happy to give them information about children's rights?

Finish by:

- 10 When the young people are happy to sign off on the ideas noted on the board/flipchart, ask for a volunteer or volunteers to fill out the boxes on the feedback sheet that you will return to the Ombudsman for Children's Office on their behalf. Alternatively, you might like to fill out the feedback sheet that you will return to the OCO. **Please return a photocopy of the completed Feedback Sheet to the OCO no later than 30th November 2016.** Thank you.

Suggestions for adapting the activity

- If time and the technology available to you allow, you might like to show the young people some of the *It's Your Right* website (www.itsyourright.ie) to give them an example of how the OCO, in addition to working with children and young people face-to-face, is using technology to raise awareness of children's rights among children and young people.
- You could open the *Tune In* resource materials on the OCO's website and show the young people the page with the images illustrating the OCO's work to raise awareness and understanding of children's rights among children and young people. The materials are available at www.oco.ie/education-and-human-rights/special-projects/tune-in/.
- There are many different ways in which you might facilitate the young people you work with to express their views on the questions belonging to the OCO's *Tune In* consultation. The reason for the approach set out above is to give each small group of young people some time to discuss, reflect and agree on some ideas in response to a specific question, which can then inform work by the whole group to finalise its ideas on all of the questions for submission to the Ombudsman for Children. Taking into account the time you can give to facilitating this activity as well as the learning preferences of the young people you work with, alternative ways of facilitating them to express their views on the four questions might include:
 - **Carousel brainstorming** – Once the young people are divided into small groups, facilitate a carousel brainstorming activity, which enables each small group to engage with each of the four questions before you invite feedback to note on the board/flipchart.
 - **Group brainstorm** – Facilitate a whole group brainstorm on the four questions, noting ideas and reasons for them on the board/flipchart. Working with the material written on the board/flipchart, support the whole group to review, refine, agree on and finalise a set of ideas to submit to the Ombudsman for Children.

- **Individual questionnaire** – Give each young person a copy of the *Your Rights, Your Ideas* activity sheet (or a version of it adapted by you). Ask each young person who wishes to take part in the consultation to come up with their own ideas in response to each question and to write them down on the sheet. Add up the results and present these to the whole group. Use the results as the basis for a group discussion that enables the group to finalise a set of ideas in response to each question, which they will submit to the Ombudsman for Children.
- **Walking debate** – Facilitate a quick whole group brainstorm on each of the questions and note the ideas on the board/flipchart. Use these initial ideas as the basis for a walking debate, which facilitates the young people to explore, discuss and refine their initial ideas. Note top ideas in response to each question as they emerge from the walking debate. Then support the whole group to finalise a set of ideas to submit to the Ombudsman for Children.
- **Collage** – Facilitate the young people to make a group collage, which provides a pictorial response to the four questions. If you decide to take this type of approach, please fill out the *Feedback Sheet to return to the OCO* in full. Please return it and, if possible, the collage or a photocopy/photograph of the collage, to the OCO.

Suggestion for extending the activity

- This activity might form the basis for a group project focused on developing and implementing a communications plan to raise awareness of children’s rights and/or the work of the Ombudsman for Children’s Office among other young people (e.g. at Youthreach or in the local community (e.g. through a local library or community centre)). Questions that could be used to support the young people to develop their communications plan include:
 - Who is our audience?
 - What are the main messages we need/want to communicate to this audience?
 - What are good ways for us to communicate these messages to our audience?
 - Who do we need support or help from to carry out this plan?
 - Are we going to have a launch? If so, when, where, who needs to be there and what will we do?
 - What do we need to do to carry out this plan? (actions)
 - Who is going to do what?

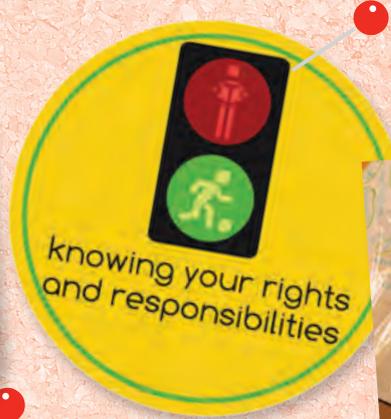
In this regard, you might facilitate the young people to do some research to find out what the preferences of their target audience are (i.e. what they need/want to know and how they would like this information to be communicated). The results of this research could inform work by the group to develop a communications plan. Following implementation of the project, the group might review what they did in order to assess what worked well and what, if anything, they might have done differently.

Ombudsman for Children's Office

Raising Awareness of Children's Rights among Children and Young People

We think that we should all have a right to express ourselves no matter what nationality, colour of skin or shape of size. 

Equality # Express yourself.



"The right to express your views when decisions are being made that affect you"

→ It's important that young people aren't ignored when decisions affecting them are made.

→ Young people's opinion must be taken on board and taken seriously.



Your Rights, Your Ideas

Good Ways to let Children and Young People know about Children's Rights

WHERE would you like to get information about children and young people's rights?

WHO would you trust and be happy to give you information about children and young people's rights?

WHAT kinds of information are you interested in getting about children and young people's rights?

HOW would you like information about children and young people's rights to be presented?

Feedback Sheet to return to the OCO



Name of Youthreach centre: _____

Group within Youthreach these ideas are from (if applicable): _____

Total number of young people who took part: _____

Age range of young people who took part (e.g 16-17 years old): _____

Final Ideas:

<p>WHERE would you like to get information about children and young people's rights?</p>	
<p>WHO would you trust and be happy to give you information about children and young people's rights?</p>	
<p>WHAT kinds of information are you interested in getting about children and young people's rights?</p>	
<p>HOW would you like information about children and young people's rights to be presented?</p>	

Name of educator returning this sheet to OCO: _____ Date: _____

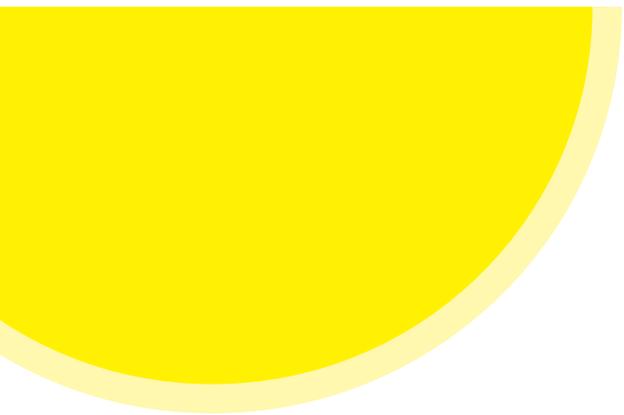
Thank you very much for taking part in *Tune In*.

Please return a photocopy of your completed feedback sheet **by 30th November 2016** to:
***Tune In*, Ombudsman for Children's Office, Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1**

Thank you
very much for
taking part in
Tune In.

Please return a photocopy of your completed
feedback sheet **by 30th November 2016** to:
Tune In, Ombudsman for Children's Office,
Millennium House, 52-56 Great Strand Street,
Dublin 1





Ombudsman for Children's Office

Millennium House
52–56 Great Strand Street
Dublin 1

Tel: (01) 865 6800

Email: oco@oco.ie

Web: www.oco.ie