

Children Now, Rights Now



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Dear colleague,

I am writing on behalf of the Ombudsman for Children's office (OCO) to invite you to get involved in our programme 'Children Now, Rights Now' and to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Ireland's Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The OCO is an independent human rights body responsible for promoting and monitoring children's rights in Ireland. Our office was set up in 2004 under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002 and we are linked to a global rights community through the UN.

Our launch event on 28th September kick-starts a year of activity marking the 25th Anniversary of Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child which will run through until 28th September 2018. There is already a unanimously positive response to the 25th Anniversary and we are really excited about what this year can achieve.

The aims for the CRC 25 'Children Now, Rights Now' programme are:

- **To celebrate** the 25th Anniversary of Ireland's Ratification of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child through a year-long programme of events and activities nationwide made in collaboration with cross-sector partners.
- **To raise awareness and understanding** of children's rights by re-visiting the promise we made to children upon ratifying the UNCRC in 1992. We want to renew that promise, acknowledging that we have individual and collective responsibility to build on the achievements of the last 25 years to continue to progress children's rights in Ireland.
- **To listen** to children and young people living in Ireland today and give them opportunities to voice their views and concerns about the issues facing them now and in the future. We want to facilitate an understanding of how rights relate to everyday lives and who supports those rights.

We are extending a national invitation across Irish society to join with us in celebrating this significant milestone for children's rights (recognising that we all have responsibility for making children's rights a reality). A key aim is to involve children along with their primary caregivers, the education sector (formal and informal) primary, secondary, 3rd level, teacher training and adult education. The OCO's experience suggests that children/young people may have only a basic understanding of rights – their purpose and mechanisms.



This extends across the public service – beyond those departments directly responsible for children’s services.

We are putting out a special call to cross-sector organisations with a current (or potential) focus on children and young people to embrace our key messages. We would like you to join in the national conversation by organising a one off event, activities or by initiating longer term projects and programmes with the 25th Anniversary in mind. The celebratory year runs from 28th September 2017 to 28th September 2018 and our key messages are:

- Let’s have a national conversation about ‘Children now and Rights now’.
- This is the UN Convention on Children’s Rights, this is the promise we made to children and young people, let’s continue working individually and collectively in realising these rights.
- Young people in Ireland are our future rights enforcers with the opportunity to shape the future. Let’s listen to their voices and see what needs to change.
- How do rights relate to children’s everyday lives and how does society support them? Young people need be aware there are people ‘in their corner’, there is the ‘Right’ support out there and sometimes in the less obvious places. Linked to this is creating a broader awareness of the supports available to children and young people and who has responsibility to do this.

To assist you as you plan, we have provided some suggestions and ideas below with a brief history of rights achievements in Ireland since Ireland’s ratification of the convention. We are also attaching a summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a ready to use presentation featuring information about the Ombudsman for Children’s Office, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the aims of the UNCRC25 programme. We are also including our UNCRC25 logo for you to include in publicity materials. We would be delighted to support and publicise your work so please feel free to get in touch and let us know if we can help connect you to other organisations to collaborate with. Let us know what you are planning and we will publicise and promote nationally on our website and through social media. If you need more information have a look at our website www.oco.ie and www.itsyourright.ie or give us a call on (01) 8656800.

Good Luck with your planning!

Regards,

Rebecca McLaughlin

Project Co-Ordinator, UNCRC25

