



ombudsman
for children & young people

What do you say?

Exploring children's rights with children

Fifth & Sixth Class



What do you say?

Exploring children's rights with children

'What do you say?' is an Ombudsman for Children's Office resource.



www.oco.ie

The original materials were edited by

Owen McCarthy

and written by a team of experienced teachers:

Anne-Marie Herron

Anne-Marie Kealy

Owen McCarthy

The new activities in these resource materials were also written by **Anne-Marie Herron, Anne-Marie Kealy** and **Owen McCarthy**.

The OCO would like to acknowledge the important contributions made by Clíodhna Ní Ghiollagáin and Kate Mitchell to the development of these materials.

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Preface

Dear Teacher,

I am delighted that you have decided to use these resource materials to learn more about some of the many issues that affect children and relate to children's rights.

My job, and statutory responsibility, is to promote the rights and welfare of children up to the age of eighteen and to ensure that in law, policy and practice their best interests are considered. People often ask me where children's rights are defined. There are two key reference points: the Constitution, which is the basic legal instrument in Ireland, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a set of internationally agreed human rights standards for children, ratified in Ireland in 1992.

In 2007, we carried out the 'Big Ballot', a project where 74,000 children voted on the key issues affecting them. 560 primary and post-primary schools, Youthreach Centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres throughout Ireland supported these children and young people to participate. It is the largest consultation with children in Ireland to date and, needless to say, could not have happened without the support and enthusiasm of teachers across the country.

Feedback on the project indicated that the principal benefits of participation for children included the opportunity to explore children's rights; to form and express opinions; and to learn about and take part in a democratic process. Teachers spoke very positively about their experience of using the resource materials and many have since requested further materials on children's rights.

The team of teachers who developed the original resource materials for primary schools agreed to work with us again on these materials. We appreciate the expertise and creativity of Owen McCarthy, Ann Marie Herron and Anne-Marie Kealy.

I know the significant role that teachers play in children's lives. Our own experience of participative work with children reminds us that, like all those working directly with children, we are learning every day.

I hope these materials will support your work and that you and the children you work with will find them not only educational but fun.

If you would like to find out more about the OCO and our work to promote the rights and welfare of children in Ireland, please visit our website - **www.oco.ie**

Many thanks,



Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children
2010

Introduction

Welcome to '*What do you say?*' This resource consists of activities that explore issues relating to children's rights. It includes references to rights in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Constitution.

These activities were created by a group of practising teachers and have been developed to facilitate implementation of aspects of the curriculum.

The materials introduce the role and work of the Ombudsman for Children's Office and give children the opportunity to explore and discuss the following issues:

- Having a voice and being heard
- Family and care
- Health, wealth and material well-being
- Education
- Play, leisure and recreation
- Inclusion

Exploration of these issues will need to be treated with sensitivity. Teachers will need to consider the particular situations and experiences of children they are working with and adapt material as required.

Drawing on previous activities and open to adaptation by teachers, the final activity in this resource focuses on supporting children to make their voices heard and views known by organising and/or taking part in a ballot.

Participation in these activities will support children to develop a broad understanding of the importance of having a voice in matters affecting them.

Constitution Article 40(6)(1)(i):
Citizens have the right to express their opinions freely.

UNCRC, Article 12:
Children have the right to have a say about things that affect them.

How to use this resource

CORE ACTIVITIES

This resource comprises a manual for teachers, which includes photocopiable activity sheets, and an accompanying DVD, which provides a focus for several of the activities. This format aims to give children an opportunity in enjoyable activities which develop their understanding of rights and citizenship.

The first activity introduces the Ombudsman for Children. The remaining activities examine issues relating to children's rights in ways that develop knowledge, skills and values associated with citizenship education. These issues provide a focus for the final ballot activity, an exercise in citizenship and an introduction to participation in a democratic process. We hope the activities will be interesting and fun for children.

EXPLORE SECTION

For those who wish to investigate these issues further, the Explore Section contains additional avenues of exploration regarding children's rights and responsibilities.

It also contains text versions of the DVD case studies and accompanying exercises for teachers who wish to follow up with written work or for those without access to a DVD player.

PARENTS

A letter for distribution to parents/guardians, from the Ombudsman for Children, accompanies this resource. To afford parents/guardians an opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the resource with their children, activity sheets have a space for a

parent's/guardian's signature. Schools are also encouraged to send home the results of the ballot activity.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The activities facilitate aspects of curriculum teaching and learning, in particular in the context of SPHE (see diagram opposite). The activities support children to explore and discuss the issues and content with reference to their own experiences. The use of story is a strong feature of the resource materials for primary schools, from the fairytale stories for Infant classes through to the case studies for Senior classes.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Although these materials have been developed for teaching and learning in the context of children's formal education, the activities can also be used for work with children in non-formal education settings - for example, as part of a programme of activity for children attending after school clubs.

METHODOLOGIES

The teaching and learning methodologies involved in completing the activities include discussion, debate, group work and role play. They encourage children to develop empathy and to take part in co-operative learning. Teachers are encouraged to support children to work together in mixed ability groups. Home links are fostered through actions that encourage further discussion of the issues at home. Children should feel a real sense of ownership of the work they do in the context of each activity.

How 'What do you say?' relates to the Curriculum for Fifth and Sixth Classes

SPHE

Myself:

- Making decisions

Myself and my family:

- Exploring different types of families

Myself and the wider world:

- Developing citizenship
- Exploring rights and responsibilities
- Exploring inequalities

SESE, Geography

Human Environments:

- People living and working in the local area

What do
you say?



Exploring children's
rights with children

Drama

- Exploring and making drama
- Reflecting on drama
- Cooperating, etc. in making drama

Language

Oral:

- Discussion
- Arguing a point of view
- Improvisational drama

Writing:

- Summarising stories
- Writing lists, reports, and interview schedules

Reading:

- Reading stories / case studies and responding orally and in writing

	Page	Materials
Preface	4	
Introduction	5	
ACTIVITY 1: Introducing the Ombudsman for Children	9	DVD Track 3 OCO Poster
ACTIVITY 2: A Right to be heard	15	DVD Track 4 Poster - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
ACTIVITY 3: Kevin's choice	21	DVD Track 8
ACTIVITY 4: Play for All!	27	
ACTIVITY 5: Caitlín's Mirror	33	DVD Track 9
ACTIVITY 6: My Health and My Rights	37	
ACTIVITY 7: My Life is Now	43	DVD Track 10
ACTIVITY 8: Me, I'm Safe?	49	
ACTIVITY 9 Your Voice, Your Vote	57	
Explore Section	67	

MISSING SOMETHING?

THE MATERIALS IN THIS PACK ARE AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD FROM OUR SITE WWW.OCO.IE

KEY TO ICONS



DVD Scene



**Writing
Drawing**



**Class Discussion
Read Aloud**



Homelink

The work of the Ombudsman for Children

ACTIVITY 1

Introducing the Ombudsman for Children





Introducing the Ombudsman for Children

This activity introduces children to the Ombudsman for Children. The central component is an interview on DVD with Emily Logan. If the children are not already familiar with her, do not tell them in advance that the Ombudsman for Children is a woman.

OBJECTIVE:

Children are introduced to and explore the role of the Ombudsman for Children

YOU WILL NEED:

- OCO Poster
- DVD Track 3
- Activity sheet 1
- Letter for parents/guardians
- **Note:** *If you do not have access to a DVD player, you can use Emily's letter to children on p70 in the Explore Section of this manual as an alternative starting point.*

Ombudsman for Children

The word Ombudsman comes from Scandinavia. The 'Ombuds' part means defender of rights and the 'man' part refers to mankind. So an Ombudsman can be either a man or a woman. S/he is a person who protects the rights of individuals or a group in relation to the powers and actions of government and other public organisations. In the case of an Ombudsman for Children, the beneficiaries of his/her work are children.



INTRODUCTION:*The Ombudsman for Children's Role*

Have a brief introductory discussion about what an Ombudsman for Children might do, e.g. draw attention to children's issues. Some details of the context within which the Ombudsman for Children works should underpin the discussion - for example, s/he is independent; s/he is not a member of government and cannot pass laws, but s/he can influence the drafting of laws, government policy and decisions that affect children.

DEVELOPMENT:*Interviewing the Ombudsman for Children*

- Divide the children into small groups.
- Ask children if they were interviewing someone for the job of Ombudsman for Children, what questions would it be important to ask?
- Ask groups to discuss and list their interview questions on activity sheet 1.
- When they have done this, explain that children and young people actually participated in the interview process for Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children.
- Show DVD Track 3 or, alternatively, read out Emily's letter on page 70 of the Explore Section of this manual. Ask the children what they found interesting.

- Ask them how Emily compares in relation to their initial questions on the worksheet.
- Ask the children to identify a list of key points from the DVD Track 3 or, alternatively, from the letter. Appoint recorders to note these for display.

DISPLAY

Display work recorded from the main activity.

EXPLORE

The role of the Ombudsman for Children is explored further in later activities in this resource. Additional ideas for activities about the Ombudsman for Children's work can be found in the Explore Section.

HOME LINK

Give the children a photocopy of Emily's letter to parents/guardians, which introduces them to the Ombudsman for Children's Office. Encourage the children to discuss the work they did on activity sheet 1 with their parents/guardians.



Activity 1: Sheet 1



NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Questionnaire for candidates for the job of Ombudsman for Children

AREA	QUESTIONS
Qualifications	
Think of qualifications that would be important for the job.	1. 2.
Experience	
Think of different experiences you would like the future Ombudsman for Children to have had.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Suitability	
Think of the kind of person you would like the Ombudsman for Children to be.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.



Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Letter for Parents / Guardians

Dear Parent or Guardian

I am writing to you because your child is learning about our work at the Ombudsman for Children's Office in school.

As you may know, as Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children, my job is to promote the rights and welfare of all children up to the age of 18.

In my role as Ombudsman for Children, I have a statutory obligation to raise awareness of issues relating to children's rights and welfare, including among children and young people.

In collaboration with experienced teachers, we developed a set of educational activities so that children can learn in school about what we do and explore topics that are relevant to children's lives in Ireland.

These activities originally belonged to a project called the Big Ballot, which our Office did in 2007. Hundreds of schools and almost 75,000 children and young people throughout Ireland took part in this project. Its purpose was to give children an opportunity to tell us what issues are important to them and, with that, to help our Office decide what issues to work on.

Hearing children's views, highlighting their concerns, and supporting children's participation in decisions that affect them are central to our work here at the Ombudsman for Children's Office.

We continue to learn a great deal from the opinions and ideas that children and young people share with us. We are very aware of the extent to which parents and professionals support children and young people to find out about, contact and engage with our Office. This support is something that we really value and appreciate.

If you would like to know more about the work of our Office, please visit our website www.oco.ie, email us at oco@oco.ie or phone us on 01-8656800 to request an information pack.

Many thanks,



Emily Logan

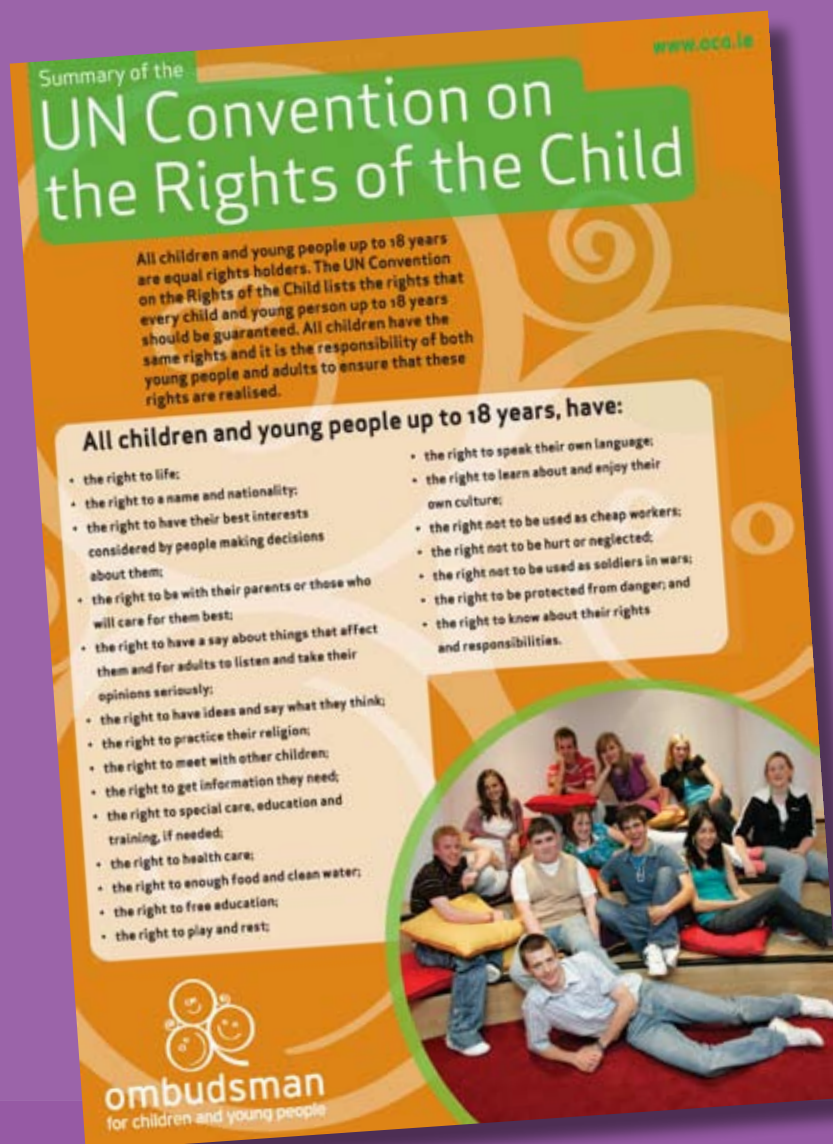
Ombudsman for Children



Having a voice and being heard

ACTIVITY 2

A Right to be Heard




Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child


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All children and young people up to 18 years are equal rights holders. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child lists the rights that every child and young person up to 18 years should be guaranteed. All children have the same rights and it is the responsibility of both young people and adults to ensure that these rights are realised.

All children and young people up to 18 years, have:

- the right to life;
- the right to a name and nationality;
- the right to have their best interests considered by people making decisions about them;
- the right to be with their parents or those who will care for them best;
- the right to have a say about things that affect them and for adults to listen and take their opinions seriously;
- the right to have ideas and say what they think;
- the right to practice their religion;
- the right to meet with other children;
- the right to get information they need;
- the right to special care, education and training, if needed;
- the right to health care;
- the right to enough food and clean water;
- the right to free education;
- the right to play and rest;
- the right to speak their own language;
- the right to learn about and enjoy their own culture;
- the right not to be used as cheap workers;
- the right not to be hurt or neglected;
- the right not to be used as soldiers in wars;
- the right to be protected from danger; and
- the right to know about their rights and responsibilities.


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for children and young people





Having a voice and being heard

A Right to be Heard

This activity introduces children to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This Convention is an internationally agreed set of standards and obligations that most countries in the world, including Ireland, have signed up to. These basic standards - also called human rights - identify minimum entitlements and freedoms that governments should respect and protect. The UNCRC identifies the right to be heard in decisions that affect them as a core right of children.

Constitution Article 40 (6)(1)(i):

Citizens have the right to express their opinions freely.

Article 12:

Children have the right to have a say about things that affect them.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- understand that the UNCRC is an important international agreement in relation to children's rights;
- explore their right to be heard and strategies for asserting their opinions.

YOU WILL NEED:

- DVD Track 4
- UNCRC Poster
- Activity sheet 2



INTRODUCTION:*Introducing the UNCRC*

- Display the UNCRC poster and explain that it is a list of rights that every child has. Most countries around the world, including Ireland, have agreed to respect and protect these rights.
- Read through the poster with the children. Invite comments.
- Play DVD Track 4 which introduces the UNCRC.
- Have a brief discussion about the rights referred to by Emily on Track 4 and on the UNCRC poster.
- Ask the children why they think the people who drafted the Convention thought it necessary to stress *all* children?
- Ask for examples of groups of children whose rights might need extra protection in Ireland and ask one or more of the children to record them.



**DEVELOPMENT:***Raising Your Voice*

This activity explores strategies for children to use their voices. The ensuing discussion may be used to explore the importance of the issue.

Teacher Note:

Research undertaken for the OCO suggests that there is a general feeling among children that they are not heard sufficiently and/or that their concerns/opinions are not taken seriously. This lesson focuses on the importance of being heard and gives examples of where children can have a voice.

- Ask for volunteers to act as judges.
- Divide the other children into groups where they are seated. Make sure that they have access to paper, markers, etc. In advance, and to make the activity more fun, organise a resource table with as many different items as possible, which groups can use later as props for their presentation.
- Give one of the statements on activity sheet 2 to each group.
- Give groups time to devise a strategy for presenting their message so that it stands out above the message of the other groups. Explain that

physical contact with other groups will not be allowed. Point groups to the resource table and outline rules, as you wish, about taking objects.

- As groups work, prepare the judges by discussing what they might give marks for.
- When planning time is over, groups simultaneously implement their strategies.
- Summarise the strategies that were chosen, e.g. loud shouting, big signs, dramatic representations. Discuss how effective the strategies were.
- Ask judges to give their verdict on the most effective presentation(s).
- Ask children to consider the impact of adding their voices together. Are their voices more effective when joined together?
- Facilitate a discussion about how children can make their voices heard effectively in school.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 1:

Ask the children to write and illustrate ways we can use our voices and make ourselves heard, based on the their discussions and experiences during the activity they have just completed.

EXPLORE:

To explore the theme of having a voice and being heard or to develop work with the children about the UNCRC, see the ideas and activities in the Explore Section.

Having a voice and being heard

NAME:

DATE:



I am important

No one listens to me

Children are people too

I am surrounded by sheep

Look at me when I speak to you

My voice carries weight in this classroom

Education

ACTIVITY 3

Kevin's Choice





Education

Kevin's Choice

This activity facilitates children to explore barriers for minorities to full participation in schooling through the experience of a young Traveller.

Constitution, Article 42:

The State recognises the right to education.

UNCRC, Article 28:

Children have the right to education.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- engage with the right to education;
- explore an example of barriers minorities can face to getting a good education.

YOU WILL NEED:

- DVD Track 8 *Kevin's Choice*,
- or, alternatively, the text of this case study on page 75 in the Explore Section of this manual

Teacher Note:

Travellers have always been interested in education, but many have been unconvinced of the benefits of schooling as it does not often lead to employment. This is changing. Most young Travellers now continue into secondary school. Several now sit their Leaving Certificate exam and there is greater involvement at third level. However, the pressure to drop out because of discrimination or for social and economic reasons can be intense as illustrated in this case study, which is based on the words of a second year student in the South West of Ireland.

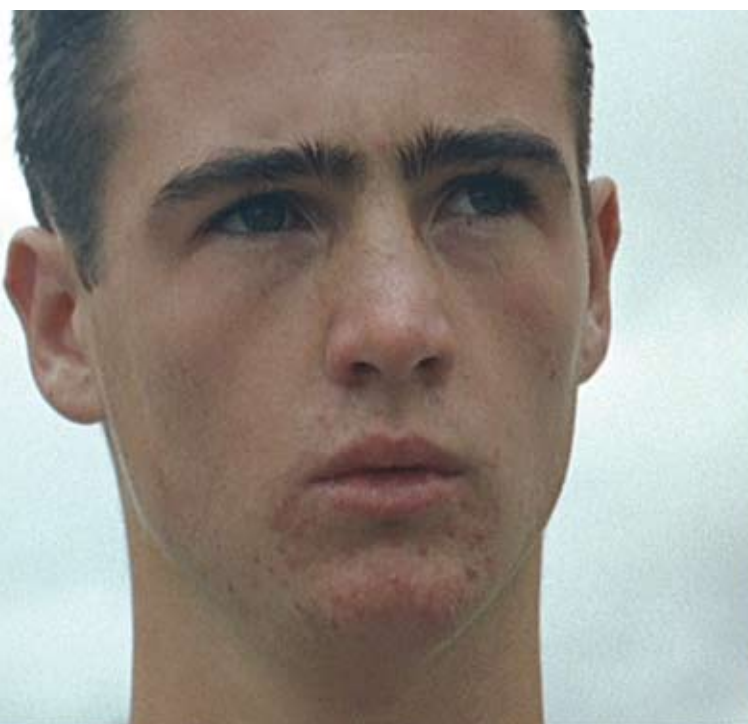
General statistics about Traveller life are stark, demonstrating the impact of exclusion. For instance, Travellers continue to have a much lower life expectancy than the general population.



INTRODUCTION

Barriers to Education

- Ask a small number of children to act as recorders.
- Ask the children which *groups of children* in Ireland they think face barriers to getting a good education. For each group they name, the children should come up with a *suggestion* for dealing with the perceived barrier.
- List groups of children and corresponding suggestions on the board and ask the recorders to list the same on paper for subsequent display. Recorders should use a different colour for each group/suggestion cluster.



DEVELOPMENT*Kevin's Choice***Teacher Note:**

The issue of responsibility around schooling clearly requires sensitive handling, but it should be explained to children that it is the State's duty to provide education and to ensure that schools are welcoming to children belonging to minority groups. Kevin's treatment by one teacher, Mr. Brown, gives an opportunity for children to broach the issue of people being treated differently because of what they are rather than who they are. The extent to which you probe the issues with the class may depend on the extent to which children have already engaged with human rights issues.

Play Track 8 of the DVD or read out the text of this case study.

Follow-up with a short discussion.

Possible questions are:

- What stage of school is Kevin at?
- What assumption did Mr. Brown make about Kevin?
- What does Kevin think are the advantages of staying in school?
- What would be the advantages of leaving now?
- Do you think Kevin will stay at school?
- How do you think the Ombudsman for Children might be able to help make sure children belonging to minority groups are included in school?

DISPLAY:

The sheets compiled by the recorders in the opening activity may be displayed in the classroom for future reference.

EXPLORE:

Some suggestions for further exploration of this topic can be found in the Explore Section of this manual.



Play

ACTIVITY 4

Play for All!



Play

Play for All

Raising children's awareness that play is identified as a *right* of children in and by the UNCRC, this activity also provides an opportunity to open a conversation on bullying.

UNCRC, Article 31:

Children have the right to play and rest.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- explore issues which limit enjoyment of play;
- recognise that children's enjoyment of their right to play involves responsibilities on the part of adults and children.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Activity sheet 3
- Large display page for each group
- Markers

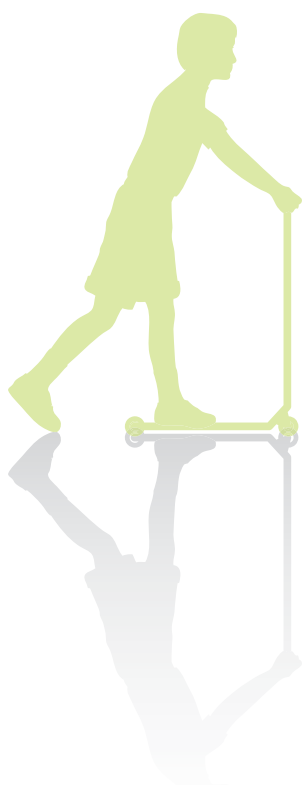


INTRODUCTION:

Play is not just fun!

Facilitate the children to briefly discuss the following questions:

- Play is fun. Why might playing also be an important part of growing up? (e.g. learn through interaction and in safety, form relationships, try new things out, stay healthy and happy).
- What things can get in the way of children enjoying their right to play? (e.g. bullying, exclusion, poor facilities, badly designed living spaces, lack of opportunity, work).
- What responsibilities do adults and children have to help make sure every child's right to play is respected?



DEVELOPMENT:

I have the right to play

Ask the children to get into groups and give them time to work together to complete activity sheet 3 and chart.

Afterwards facilitate the children to share and discuss their views, emphasising throughout where responsibility lies.



DISPLAY:

Display the children's play charts.

EXPLORE:

Additional ideas for exploring this theme, including a group art activity, are provided in the Explore Section.

HOME LINK:

Ask the children to bring home activity sheet 3 and to discuss the work they have done with their parents/guardians.



Play for All!

NAME:

DATE:

Working with your partners, please complete this activity sheet and then move on to the task at the end of the page.

When I am playing, I really hate when:



When I am playing, I really love when:



These are the play facilities I think every child would really like to have :

With your partners, make a Play Chart. Divide a large sheet in two with the headings **GOOD PLAY RULES** and **GOOD PLAY FACILITIES**. Looking back at what you wrote on the **PLAY** worksheet, make a list for each. Thank you!



Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____



Family and Care

ACTIVITY 5

Caitlín's Mirror





Family and Care

Caitlín's Mirror

This activity supports children to look at children's right to family and care while also affording them an insight into the experiences of a young person in residential care. Residential care can be in a children's residential centre registered under the Child Care Act (1991), a school or another suitable place of residence.

Constitution, Article 41:

The family has a special place in society.

UNCRC, Articles 7 and 9:

Children have the right to be with their parents or those who can care for them best.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- examine children's right to family and care;
- explore how there can be barriers to enjoying a secure family life.

YOU WILL NEED:

- DVD Track 9 *Caitlín's Mirror*
- or, alternatively, the text of this case study on page 79 in the Explore Section of this manual

VOCABULARY**you may need to explain:**

- Residential care
- Health authorities
- Sleeping rough
- Aftercare
- The difference between *having the obligation to* and *having the power to* also needs explanation, e.g. as follows: *I don't **have to** be nice to other children but I **can** be.*



INTRODUCTION:

- Begin by discussing the difference between a house and a home.
- Ask the children for examples of different types of home.
- Ask them if having a home is the same as having a family.
- Give the children time to discuss what a family consists of.
- What problems might families have to face, e.g. poverty, crime, death? Ask recorders to note the challenges the children identify so that they can form part of a display on the topic.
- With sensitivity, introduce the idea of fostering and residential care. Discuss how children may not always have a family or their family may not always be able to look after them for one or more reasons.



DEVELOPMENT:

Caitlín's Mirror

Play DVD Track 9 or read out the text of this case study.

Discuss it with the children, using questions such as:

- How long had Caitlín spent in Dromore House?
- What was Dromore House?
- Why do you think Caitlín was violent sometimes?
- What did Molly do for Caitlín?
- When is Caitlín's birthday?
- What exam was she studying for?
- Why could she not concentrate on her studying?
- Who are Caitlín's family now?
- What did the Ombudsman for Children do for Caitlín?

Briefly re-visit difficulties that families might have to deal with and ask the recorders to note any additional points made by the children to their earlier list.



DISPLAY:

Make a display of the children's work on this topic.

EXPLORE:

Further ideas for exploring this theme are available in the Explore Section.



Health, wealth and material well-being

ACTIVITY 6

My Health and my Rights



Health, wealth and material well-being

My Health and my Rights

This activity supports children to reflect on the importance of health and to consider, through the example of their right to health care, how different children's rights are interdependent.

UNCRC, Articles 24 and 27:

Children have the right to the best health care possible, safe water to drink, nutritious food, clothes, a clean and safe place to live, and to information to help them stay well.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- explore the importance of health;
- consider the interdependence of different children's rights.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Activity sheet 4
- UNCRC poster
- Construction paper and markers for each group



INTRODUCTION:

Introducing issues of health

Explain to the children that 40% of the world's people do not have access to safe water and sanitation (UNICEF).

Ask children to discuss briefly:

- the lottery of where people are born;
- different ways in which water is essential to our health;
- who looks after them when they are sick;
- which groups of children are most vulnerable when they are sick.

DEVELOPMENT:

My Health and my Rights

Ask children to recall the children's rights issues they have covered with you so far: voice, education, play, and family and care.

- Divide the children into groups. Give each group a large sheet of chart paper, pens, scissors and a copy of activity sheet 4. Ask each group to draw a large circle on the chart paper and to write the word HEALTH in the centre. Ask the children to cut out the other UNCRC rights from activity sheet 4 and place them in a circle around the central word.
- Groups should, following discussion, draw arrows to other rights they think are affected by poor health.

- They should record, by writing and/or illustration, one or more reasons or examples along the arrow shafts.
- Ask groups to reverse the process by looking at the rights on the outside of the wheel and identifying how their absence can affect health. They should add a new reverse arrow pointing back to health from each right and, along the arrow shafts, write a word/short phrase explaining how absence of that right impacts on children's health.

Discussion should focus on the central importance of health in our lives and also on the inter-connections between rights.

DISPLAY:

Support the children to make a display of their work .

EXPLORE:

Further ideas for exploring this theme are available in the Explore Section.



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a list of the rights that every child and young person should be able to enjoy. All children have the same rights and it is the responsibility of young people, adults and the State to make sure children's rights are respected and protected.

All children up to 18 years, have:

- the right to life
- the right to a name and nationality
- the right to have their best interests considered by people making decisions about them
- the right to be with their parents or those who will care for them best
- the right to have a say about things that affect them and for adults to listen and take their opinions seriously
- the right to have ideas and say what they think
- the right to practise their religion
- the right to meet with other children
- the right to get information they need
- the right to special care, education and training if they need it
- the right to health care
- the right to enough food and clean water
- the right to free education
- the right to play and rest
- the right to speak their own language
- the right to learn about and enjoy their own culture
- the right not to be used as cheap workers
- the right not to be hurt or neglected
- the right not to be used as soldiers in wars
- the right to be safe and protected from danger
- the right to know about their rights and responsibilities



Inclusion

ACTIVITY 7

My Life is Now



Inclusion

My Life is Now

This activity supports children to explore the rights of vulnerable children through the eyes of Mark, a young man with a degenerative disease. Mark's presentation of his experience focuses on ability rather than disability and on dignity and respect rather than sympathy.

My Life is Now is based on a real case investigated by the Ombudsman for Children. The film will support discussion on a wide range of issues related to the dignity and rights of children, including children with disabilities.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will explore:

- the nature and effects of disability;
- challenges facing and perspectives of children and young people who are vulnerable.

YOU WILL NEED:

- DVD track 10, *My Life is Now*
- or, alternatively, the text of this case study on page 84 in the Explore Section of this manual
- Copies of activity sheet 5

Constitution, Article 40:

All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law.

UNCRC**Article 2:**

All children have the same rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or a girl, what their culture is, whether or not they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3:

The best interests of children should be a primary consideration in all decisions concerning children.

Article 23:

Children with a disability have the right to special education and care if they need it so they can live a full life.



INTRODUCTION:

- Introduce DVD track 10 *My Life is Now*. Ask the children to listen very closely to what Mark has to say about his life and explain that you will be discussing the film with them afterwards. If you do not have access to a DVD player, etc. to show the film, you can read out the text of *My Life is Now*.
- Play or read out *My Life is Now*.



- Display the children's work. Then ask the children to review their combined effort and to give their overall impression of Mark. Facilitate the children to agree on one of Mark's statements as the title for their display.

DEVELOPMENT:

- Start a follow-up discussion by asking the children about the meaning of the title 'My Life is Now' – what does the title suggest about Mark and about children in general? Continue by examining Mark's attitudes and statements, i.e. how he shows how similar he is to other young people his age and how positive he is. Ask children if they can recall any particularly striking words or phrases. List these on the board and facilitate the children to explore their meaning. Encourage the children to reflect on their responses to Mark's description of how he sees himself, placing an emphasis on the roundedness of his character.



- Ask the children to get into groups and distribute a copy of activity sheet 5 to each group. Give each group one of the following keywords and ask the group to explore Mark's character and life based on the keyword they have been given: *needs, dignity, respect, ordinary, positive, strong, independent*. Ask each group to write the keyword they have been given as a heading on their worksheet and to note the main points they have come up with about Mark's character and life using their keyword.

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY**

Note for teachers: Children should complete this activity in pairs or small groups. If practicable, ask the children to complete the activity as an active homework exercise. (The Geography Curriculum Guidelines (pp.136-140) provide information to support advance map preparation).

- Divide the children into pairs or small groups.
- Ask each pair/group to agree on an imaginary local event or appointment to go to with Mark (e.g. a doctor's or barber's appointment, a swimming gala or football match).
- One member of the pair/group should try to see each stage of the trip through Mark's eyes, with the others prompting and recording. Encourage the children to look out for good practice as well as planning deficiencies along the route.
- On completion, the children should work together in their pairs/groups to draw up a short access report, noting obstacles, problems and good practice as well as making recommendations.

EXPLORE

Additional ideas for exploring issues relating to Mark's rights and needs are available in the *Explore Section*.

My Life is Now

NAME:	DATE:
KEYWORD:	





ACTIVITY 8

Me, I'm Safe?



Me, I'm Safe?

This activity supports children to explore the theme of bullying and the roles that various people, including the local community garda, might play in helping to make sure children are safe.

Note for teachers:

Research on obstacles to children realising their rights conducted for the OCO by University College Cork in 2007 indicated that children who come into conflict with the law and become involved in the criminal justice system are among several groups of children in Ireland who face multiple obstacles as regards realising their rights. For this reason, we decided to develop an activity that would enable children to engage with the theme of 'children and the law' in an age-appropriate way, i.e. by considering garda presence at community level.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Copies of Activity sheet 6

INTRODUCTION:

- Read out or ask the children to read the story *It's all my Fault*.



It's All My Fault

John rarely got into trouble at school but he wasn't very happy either. Although he wasn't picked on much by bullies like Dempsey or O'Keefe, he wasn't part of any gang and wasn't often asked to play by the other children. They thought he liked to keep to himself, but it wasn't really like that. He just felt shy and found it hard to think of anything to say, a lot of the time. He got very jealous of some of the other children, like Bernard, who was popular and was always having fun.

When he crossed Station Field to do the shopping for his Mum, as he did regularly, he often saw Bernard with three or four boys from the secondary school who hung out regularly near the straggly bushes in the corner. John didn't even have the courage to nod to them and he envied the casual way that Bernard chatted and laughed with them. One day, as he was passing, he saw one of them chasing a red-faced Bernard and shouting curses at his retreating back. He noticed that Bernard stayed well away from the field afterwards. John felt good about that. Serves him right, he thought, for being too big for his boots.

A fortnight later on his way to the shops, one of the boys shouted at him to come over. He thought of running away, but realised he wouldn't be quick enough. He walked over nervously. The boys looked him up and down but said nothing.

Remembering the incident with Bernard, he began to get very frightened and said, "I have to hurry to get the shopping or my Mum will be out looking for me." They smirked and continued to look him up and down. Suddenly, the biggest boy handed him a five euro note and said "Get me a coke, when you're over there." John ran off thankfully. On his way back, he delivered the can to the boy. They were all much friendlier. One boy patted him on the back. "Well done kiddo!" he laughed. John tried handing back the change but was waved away. "Th....anks", he managed to stutter. They asked him his name and where he lived. John answered and, loosening up, surprised himself by chatting and laughing with them. He felt a foot taller going home and radiated such good humour that his Mum wanted to know if he was alright. For the remainder of the week, he regularly dropped over to them on his shopping trips and loved to laugh at their jokes, although he didn't get the punch-line most of the time. He felt very superior to his classmates who were so childish in comparison to his new friends. He really felt part of the gang when one of them offered him a smoke. He didn't like the idea of smoking, but knew he couldn't refuse. He tried to look really grown-up as he puffed away and, although he worked at hiding how light-headed he felt, he spotted the thin one, Don, grinning at him.

The following Monday, he ran across to them on his way to the shops. They were deep in conversation and ignored him at first. The voices stopped. Then, without turning around, the big one, Roy, said, "Get me a coke". John waited for the money but none was offered. "What are you waiting for?" said Roy, sharply. "The money for the coke, please?" replied John timidly. Roy lifted his fist and shouted "You have my dosh. You never gave me back my change last Monday." "But, but ..." began John. The boy stared stonily at him. "Did I tell you to keep it? Did I? Did I?" he yelled. John could feel spit spraying across his face. John began crying. "Go fetch, NOW" yelled Roy. John backed away and headed for the shops, eyes streaming. Using his Mom's money, he bought a coke and brought it back. Roy grabbed it and shooed John away but, as he was leaving, Don grabbed the neck of his t-shirt. "Hey Mammy's boy", he growled, grinning nastily at him. "I'll have a coke too." John began to shake his head but stopped and gulped when Don added, in a sneering tone "Does Mammy know you smoke?" John slunk back to the shop and paid for another coke out of his Mum's money. He never lied to his mother but now he would have to pretend he had lost the money. He felt miserable.

When he returned with the coke, the boys were in a huddle and made him wait and wait. He was too frightened

to just leave the can down and go. Don eventually took it from him without even looking in his direction. John started for home with a heavy heart. In the distance, he could hear the lonely whistle of an approaching train. Just as he reached the edge of the field, vowing never to go this way to the shops again, Roy's voice carried across the open space to him. "See you tomorrow." Then he added menacingly "I know where you live."

When John got home, he crept up to his room, closed the door and buried his face in the pillow, crying. One thing he knew for sure: he could never tell anybody about what had happened. He spent the following day at school in a state of dread, unable to concentrate. He slunk up to his room after school, muttering that he didn't feel well.

Soon afterwards, he heard his Mom's voice and realised she was calling him repeatedly. Although he didn't feel like facing the world, he went slowly downstairs and into the kitchen. He got a shock when he saw a uniformed Garda sitting at the table. "Hello John!" said the Garda. "I'm Garda Seán O Farrell. Is everything all right?" John was dumbstruck. After a pause, the Garda continued "The reason I ask is that two teenagers from the secondary school reported a possible bullying incident to us, yesterday. They said they saw a boy being threatened by bigger ones

in Station Field. They gave us a very good description of all four and when we visited the schools this morning, it didn't take long to identify you and the other boys. I've been explaining to your mother what we think happened but why don't you tell us yourself?"

John's mother broke in: "Why didn't you tell me, John? How could you not have told me, your own mother?" John swallowed. Unable to meet her gaze, he stood, awkwardly shifting his feet, feeling the gaze of the two grown-ups like a weight on his shoulders. Finally, he summoned his courage and began slowly "It was all my fault ..." His voice quickened and the story poured out of his mouth, words tumbling over one another "... and the worst thing is I pretended I lost the money ... I stole your money, Mum and lied to you." John felt a surge of relief as he finished.

"You needn't worry about those boys. They won't bother you again," said the Garda. As he walked down the hallway towards the door, he turned back and added: "And John! ... It wasn't your fault!"

When the Garda had left, his mother gave him a big hug. "Forget about the money. It isn't important. All that matters is that you are safe."

Three days later, he answered a knock at the door and paled when he saw Don standing there. His mother arrived out and quickly sized up the situation. She glared at Don, tight-lipped. Don held up his hands and said, "I came to say how sorry I was. I know you were frightened, John. I was trying to show what a big guy I was and I was afraid to say to the others that I didn't like what we were doing. I thought they'd laugh at me or even worse, but I got a wake-up call when Garda O'Farrell came to the school. I know what I did was wrong and I'm really sorry." John's mother replied, "I won't pretend I'm not angry at what you did but I'm glad you had the courage to call around and apologise. I think you have helped to teach John a valuable lesson." Don waved to John and smiled as he closed the gate behind him.

**DEVELOPMENT:**

Either ask the children to complete activity sheet 6 or discuss the story with the children and invite their responses to questions like:

- Why was John not very happy at the beginning of the story?
- How did this make him vulnerable to bullying?
- The story suggests one thing bullies try to stop their victims doing. What is it?
- What did the older gang do to manipulate John so that he would not tell adults what was happening?
- Do you think the story shows teenagers as 'trouble'?
- What 'valuable lesson' is John's mother referring to?
- What do you think John's attitude to Bernard is now?
- What do you think the main message of the story is?

Follow-up by facilitating the children to consider:

- the effects of the Community Garda's intervention on the lives of the people in the story;
- the roles other adults might play in such circumstances;
- actions that a child who is being bullied might take.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 1

Give the children an opportunity to record or develop the discussion generated through the development activity – for example, through artwork, comic strips, song (e.g. raps representing different attitudes/perspectives) or information charts.

&/or

Facilitate the children to:

- Contact the local Garda station or the Garda Schools Programme (details available on www.garda.ie/Controller.aspx?Page=1663) to arrange for a garda to come in to talk to them;
- Agree on questions to ask the garda when s/he visits.

EXPLORE

Additional ideas for issues raised in this activity can be found in the Explore Section.

Me, I'm Safe?

1. Why was John not very happy?

2. How did this make him vulnerable to bullying?

3. The story suggests one thing bullies try to stop their victims doing. What is it?

4. What did the older gang do to manipulate John so that he would not tell adults what was happening?

5. Do you think the story only shows teenagers as 'trouble'? Explain your answer.

6. What 'valuable lesson' is John's mother referring to?

7. What do you think John's attitude to Bernard is now?

8. What do you think the main message of the story is?

9. What are 3 effects of the community garda's intervention on the lives of the people in the story?

10. What are 3 actions that a child being bullied might take?

Write down the number of your local garda station and store it in your mobile:

A Ballot on Children's Issues

ACTIVITY 9

*Your Voice,
Your Vote*



A Ballot on Children Issues

Your Voice, Your Vote

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Almost 75,000 children and young people in over 560 schools and centres throughout the country took part in the Big Ballot consultation organised by the Ombudsman for Children's Office in 2007. Feedback from participating children, teachers and principals indicated that among the principal benefits of participation in the Big Ballot were opportunities for children to learn about children's rights; to form and express opinions; and to participate in a democratic process by casting votes on children's rights issues. Teachers also told us that children were really engaged and enthusiastic about taking part in a ballot and the experience of casting a vote. This final activity builds on this feedback, containing as it does suggestions for holding a ballot on children's issues.

DO I HOLD A SINGLE CLASS OR A WHOLE SCHOOL BALLOT?

The ballot can of course be undertaken at class level. However, the learning from the Big Ballot suggests that interest in, excitement about and learning from the exercise can be significantly enhanced by conducting the ballot on a whole school basis. If you can take this approach, it is recommended that you and your colleagues give 6th class children responsibility for organising the whole school ballot. Whether you undertake a ballot with the children in your class or participate in a whole school ballot, giving roles and responsibilities to children around organising the ballot for the duration of the process will make the activity more fun and enhance its value as an exercise in citizenship.



WHAT ISSUES DO CHILDREN VOTE ON?

Facilitating children to take part in a ballot focused on the issues they have explored through the preceding activities in this resource will support children to reflect on the importance of making informed decisions and choices. However, the ballot activity could also be used as an opportunity for children to identify, articulate and vote on issues that are most important to them in, for example, their school or their local area.

FEED BACK TO THE OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN'S OFFICE

Here at the Ombudsman for Children's Office, we would be delighted to hear from the children about the issues they have voted on and why they think one or more of these issues is so important. They can email us at:

oco@oco.ie

or write to us, with 'Our Ballot Results' on the envelope, at:

**Ombudsman for Children's Office,
1st Floor, Millennium House,
52-56 Great Strand Street,
Dublin 1.**

Depending on how you approach this activity, there are any number of people who the children could share the results of their ballot with and/or who they could ask to take their results on board – for example, your school's principal and Board of Management; local county councillors and TDs; or local service providers and community organisations.

NOTE FOR TEACHERS ON FACILITATING THIS ACTIVITY:

However you decide to conduct this activity, you will need to adapt the steps we outline below to take account of:

- the ages and capacities of the children you are working with;
- the class you are working with;
- whether you are holding a class or whole school ballot;
- whether you are basing the ballot around the issues in this resource or other issues raised by the children themselves.

If you are teaching infant or junior class children and are focusing the ballot on the issues explored through this resource, you might remind the children of the issues by referring back to the stories. In terms of voting, you may wish to devise a more age-appropriate approach to facilitating younger children to cast their votes. For example, you could allocate a different colour to each issue and ask the children to use, for example, equivalent coloured blocks, paper or alternative materials available to you in the classroom in order to express their preference.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- develop their understanding of democratic practices;
- identify and prioritise issues that affect and are important to them;
- have the opportunity to take a positive action in relation to the issue prioritised (optional).

YOU WILL NEED:

- To develop and make copies of a ballot paper, etc. to facilitate the holding of a ballot (templates are provided to assist you with this).

ACTIVITY**1. Preparing for the ballot**

All classes:

- Facilitate the children to review the issues they have explored through the activities in this resource. Alternatively, if you are not basing the ballot on the issues in this resource, support the children to identify five issues that affect and matter to them in, for example, their school or their local community.
- In preparation for the vote, divide the children into groups, one for each issue to be voted on. Ask each group to prepare a short presentation to the class on their issue with the aim of persuading others to vote for it. Each group could also display any work they have done that is relevant to the issue and/or design and display a campaign poster about the issue.
- Advertise the ballot and the identified issues.
- Raise the children's awareness of procedures for the ballot (i.e. why it is a secret ballot, how to use a ballot paper, etc.) and, in more general terms, about what elections are for, etc.

*For the class/group
organising the ballot:*

- The class or group that is organising and overseeing the ballot process needs to be introduced to procedures and key roles such as returning officer, counters, guards for the voting booths and observers. In addition, the children can make issue cards for display beside ballot boxes; collect and display artwork/posters for each issue from classrooms; and prepare/design ballot papers.
- If you are working with the organising group:
 - help them to choose a Returning Officer;
 - distribute the jobs checklist;
 - support the children with deciding who will perform what role (the Returning Officer should have at least two assistants);
 - help the children to make and display a corresponding list of duties.

2. Holding the ballot

- The ballot Returning Officer will be responsible for overseeing the procedures.
- Hold the vote in an assembly area. If possible, older children could take responsibility for bringing the younger children to and from the voting area and helping to oversee the vote.
- Following the ballot, the Returning Officer should be facilitated to ensure that everyone is made aware of the results.

3. Options for follow-up activities

Encourage the children to bring home the results of the ballot. In addition, you could support the children:

- to identify and collaborate in taking a positive action in response to the issue, which topped the poll;

and/or

- to email or write a letter to the Ombudsman for Children's Office to inform us of the results of the ballot, their views on these results and, if applicable, any action they have taken in relation to the issue that received the most votes;

and/or

- to make display charts of class and/or school results.

Organising Your Ballot

Jobs Checklist

Name of Returning Officer:

The returning officer's job is:

.....

Names of Returning Officer's Assistants:

The assistants' job is:

.....

Names of Guards (for the voting booths or boxes):

The guards' job is:

.....

Names of Observers:

The observers' job is:

.....

Names of Vote Counters:

The vote counters' job is:

.....

Names of Vote Recorders:

The vote recorders' job is:

.....

Sample Ballot Paper

Please say which issue below you think is MOST important.
Put a tick in one box only.

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

Please fold and place in the ballot box.
Thank you!

Sample Returns Sheet

School name:

School address:

Ballot results

Please indicate the number of votes cast for each issue:

Issue:

Issue:

Issue:

Issue:

Issue:

School stamp:

Name of Returning Officer (in capitals):

.....

Signature of Returning Officer:



Explore Section

Explore Section

TEACHER NOTE

The Explore Section provides a basis for further investigation of the issues introduced through the main activities. It also provides text versions of the DVD stories, with accompanying exercises. Citizenship continues to be the learning focus. Activities are cross-curricular and are an opportunity for children to develop higher level thinking skills at their own pace. An emphasis is placed throughout on developing skills, attitudes and values that are consistent with human rights principles and democratic citizenship.

Suggested activities come under three headings:

- **Extension activities**, which include activity plans and/or activity sheets.
- **Extension ideas**, which can be implemented without accessing outside resources.
- **Developing the theme**, which suggests online or readily available resources, which are not included within this manual.

Introducing the Ombudsman for Children



Extension Activity 1

(English)

Ask children to read the message from Emily, complete the questions on the activity sheet and undertake the task at the end of the sheet, either individually or in groups.

Extension Activity 2

(English)

Young people played an important role in the recruitment process relating to the appointment of Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children. Their role included interviewing applicants for the job. Reminding the children of young people's participation in recruiting the Ombudsman for Children, support them to discuss what, if any, input children should have in appointing teachers and principals. Encourage children to give reasons for their views and record their viewpoints. Then facilitate the children to assess whether these views, taken in the round, indicate overall support or otherwise for children having a role in this area of decision-making.

Extension Idea

(Drama)

Look for candidates to act as a child advisor to Emily Logan. Set up interview teams to carry out the interviews. Give the teams time to collate questions and assume interviewer roles. Give the candidates a briefing on what the job might require. As a ground rule, interviewers cannot make remarks about the candidate or refer to personal or family details.

Developing the Theme

(English)

The Ombudsman for Children's Office website - Encourage children to read Emily Logan's full address and explore the OCO's website, www.oco.ie. They might like to write a review of one of the sections of the website and email it to oco@oco.ie

Me, You, Everyone, (Amnesty International, Ireland et al) - Chapter 9 contains activities, which develop the themes in this lesson.



Introducing the Ombudsman for Children

Hi everyone,

My name is Emily Logan and I have the honour of being the first Ombudsman for Children in Ireland.

That means that I work for all children and young people under 18 living in Ireland. My job is to make sure that the government and other adults really think about what is best for young people. Hearing children's opinions and concerns is a very important part of what I do because it helps me to make sure that I work on things, which really matter to children and young people.

Before I became Ombudsman for Children, I trained as a children's nurse in Temple Street Hospital in Dublin in 1982. Later I worked in London. I met lots of children who had experienced things I had never even heard about. Some children were very sick and some children I met died. Some children were not looked after very well at home and some children were really poor. Some of the injustices I saw made me angry and I realised that I had to try to make a difference.

I learned a lot about how strong young people are, how they can make hard decisions even at a young age, and how families pull together in tough situations.

I came back to Ireland in 1997 and worked as Director of Nursing in Dublin.

In November 2003, the job for Ombudsman for Children was advertised. I couldn't stop thinking



about how much I would love this job. When I was interviewed by 15 young people I wanted the job even more. I just knew it was perfect for me: it would give me the chance to make a difference.

As Ombudsman for Children, I am given lots of power that allows me to see if children and young people are getting a fair deal and, if they are not, to put questions to the government and people who make decisions. To do that I need to hear children's concerns and I need their help directly.

I am very lucky to be Ombudsman for Children. I am very serious about my job. Sometimes it can be hard – many children have difficult lives, but this just makes me want to work harder. Other parts of my job aren't hard at all: I love that I have the chance to meet children and young people often. This gives me great energy, because they are so straight and they want me to do a good job.

Emily Logan

Explore - Activity 1 - Sheet 7

NAME:

DATE:

Who is the Ombudsman for Children?

What is the purpose of her job?

What does she think is really important?

Use one word, to describe something important that Emily thinks children should have when adults are making decisions about them?

List some injustices that have made Emily angry.

Why was Emily so interested in the job of Ombudsman for Children?

What makes Emily's job hard?

What is easy for her?

What gives her great energy?

TASKS - Please:

design a picture story of Emily from the information in the piece you have read &/or go online to read Emily's full message on the OCO's website, **www.oco.ie**



Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

A right to be heard

Extension Activity 1

(English)

Begin with a general class discussion about how children listen and are listened to in their family. Then, frame a debate around or facilitate the children to discuss one or both of the following questions:

- Where do you think you can make the biggest positive contribution to family decisions?
- How important is your family in helping you make difficult decisions? Can you give an example?

Extension Idea 1

(Drama)

Children explore using different voices and voice strategies in a range of life situations such as shopping, play, using transport, attending hospital, dealing with bullies. They should use a range of strategies to make their voices heard, including supports such as signs, posters, artwork, language, clothes, drama.

Extension Idea 2

(English)

Facilitate the children to draw up a list of ways in which children can make their voices heard in school - e.g. speaking to teachers, displaying project work, drawing up a class charter, and sitting on a school council.

Extension Idea 3

(English, SPHE)

Brainstorm examples of where children's rights are not fully valued in Ireland. Support the children to search the media for examples of infringements of children's rights and to display headlines and photos in a collage. Their collage should include the children's perspectives and comments on what they have found out.

Extension Idea 4

(English SPHE)

Facilitate the children to investigate how children and young people make their voices heard through Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg at <http://www.dailnanog.ie>



Developing the Theme

TEACHER NOTE

Interactive and cooperative activities on children's rights, are available in:

- Amnesty International et al., *Me, You, Everyone*
- Irish Aid et al., *Our World, Our Future*

The theme of having a voice

is developed in *Me, You, Everyone*, Unit 4, *Responsibility*.

Agreeing rights and responsibilities

with others in class is a practical exercise for children in using their voice. You will find activities on this theme in *Our World, Our Future*, Unit 2, Lesson 3, *A Responsible World*.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The theme of human rights for all is developed through the moving story of 'Hana's Suitcase' in *Me, You, Everyone*, Unit 3, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Rights for every Child

http://www.unicef.org/uk/tz/resources/assets/pdf/every_child_colour_leaflet.pdf

Download and print the attractive booklet *Rights for Every Child* from the UNICEF website. It contains pictures along with UNCRC articles grouped around themes like education and participation. It is suitable for a mixed ability group to explore for the purpose of making a presentation on one of the issues.

Education: Kevin's Choice

Extension Activity 1

(English)

KEVIN'S STORY

Ask the children to get into groups. Distribute the activity sheet with the text of *Kevin's Choice* and ask the children to read the story together and answer the questions following discussion of the text. They should then complete the charting task outlined on the activity sheet.

How can children, including you, make your voices heard in relation to this issue?

- Compare results with another class that undertakes the same exercise. Ask a group of volunteers to write a commentary and make recommendations for action.

Developing the Theme:

STREET CHILDREN

Explore issues concerning this group of children who miss out on education.

See *Our World, Our Future*, Unit 6, Lesson 1.

Extension Activity 2

(Mathematics)

WEIGHED DOWN

Note: You will need to organise a weighing scales in advance.

- Explain that one of the things children have complained to Emily about is the weight of schoolbags.
- Ask the children to weigh their schoolbags. Then give them time to talk about the weight and explain what contributes to it.
- Ask children to consider some of the following questions:

How well do you think your class does in relation to this issue?

What has your school done about this issue? Is there anything else your school could do?

Kevin's Choice

Howya. My name is Kevin and I'm a Traveller. I've just started my second year of secondary school and I don't know what to do – whether to stay in school or leave. If I leave school now, I can collect a bit of copper, bring it to the scrapyard and do the markets – make a few pound. If I leave now and don't do me Junior Cert and the scrap dealing and the markets don't work out, then I won't have much choices left. There's two sides to this and the two of them have problems for me.

On the one hand the people I go to school with call me names cos I'm a Traveller. They think they're better than me, but I won't let them get away with that. There's problems with one or two of the teachers as well – they don't think much of me cos I'm a Traveller. For example, on the first week back I went into Mr Browne's class and he couldn't believe a Traveller was in his top class. He says to me "are you not in the wrong class Reilly?" In primary school one of the teachers didn't like me much either. Me friends dropped out because of this – they don't like school no more. Still, I wouldn't be in school today if I hadn't got a few good, nice teachers.

In my father's time, Traveller childer didn't get taught much. Schools didn't understand Travellers and where they were comin' from or what kind of lifestyle they had. Y'know, very few Traveller childer went to secondary school. They left early and went working with their family. Even though it was against the law for childer to leave

school that early, no one ever checked up on them. Most Travellers didn't stay in school cos it wouldn't lead to a good job, but I hope that's all changin' now.

On the other hand my Traveller friends call me names as well because they don't think much of school. They don't really like school that much. They think I'm wastin' me time. My uncles thought the same thing as well cos they didn't get much out of school. So, as I said, there's two sides to this story.

Yeah, I do get into trouble sometimes like – I'm no angel. I'm findin' it very hard at the moment but I believe if I work hard for the next few years, I can do something with my life. You need a good education to get a good job. People who leave school early have less of a chance. I remember, when I was finished primary school, I was going to leave and the same last year, but now I can see that a good education will get a good aul' life for me and me aul' family.



NAME:

DATE:

Kevin's Choice

Please talk about the story with your group and then answer these questions:

1. What choice does Kevin have to make?

2. What stage of school is Kevin at?

3. Is there anything wrong with what Mr. Browne said to Kevin?

4. What does Kevin think are the advantages of staying in school?

5. What would be the advantages of leaving now?

6. Do you think Kevin will stay at school?

7. Looking back at the story, can you find any reasons why Kevin might get into trouble?

With your group, make a chart showing, from Kevin's point of view, advantages of staying in school on one side and disadvantages on the other.



Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Play for all!



Extension Activity 1

(Art)

CHILDREN PLAYING

- Each group should have a large sheet of paper or card.
- Ask the children to discuss with partners how to design a useful play facility for their age group.
- They should think about access for all, signs, safety, fun for all. The children should try to visualize all the different groups of children who will use it. It must be suitable for both boys and girls and accommodate children with special needs.
- The children should write as many instructions, comments or explanatory notes as they wish to accompany the design.
- Finish with a short discussion about what adults and decision-makers could do to improve play opportunities.

Extension Idea 1

(English)

Extend this activity by asking groups to draw up a list of responsibilities of those who are in charge of the facility, those who use it and those who pass close to it.



Developing the Theme

CHILD LABOUR

Explore issues concerning children who miss out on play because they are working in *Me, You, Everyone* (Amnesty International Ireland et al), Unit 7.

Family and Care: Caitlín's Mirror

Extension Activity 1

(English)

CAITLÍN'S MIRROR

Ask children to read *Caitlín's Mirror* and to answer the questions on the activity sheet. Give them the option of responding to these questions individually, in pairs or in small groups.

Extension Idea 1

(Media Studies)

Support the children to review the media (e.g. a local or national newspaper) for one day or one week and to identify stories where there are barriers to families living happily. Facilitate the children to name some of the barriers and to suggest ways they might be dealt with.

Extension Idea 2

(Art)

Children might bring in photos of their family or collect photos from magazines of different types of family for collage.

Developing the Theme

Children can explore relationships with others, including family members, in *Me, You, Everyone* (Amnesty International, Ireland et al), Unit 2.

Caitlín's Mirror

My name is Caitlin. I've been living in Dromore House for the past five years. That's a lot of my life. Now I have to leave.

How did I get here? Well, I lived in foster care when I was younger.

It was hard. Not knowing who my mam and dad were - my natural parents. I often tried to imagine. It's hard to cope with. So, sometimes I got very angry. And violent.

When I was twelve, I started sleeping rough and getting into serious trouble with the police. Living on the streets is tough. My health suffered.

It was decided that Dromore House, a residential centre for girls, would be the most suitable place for me. I really hated the idea. I didn't want to go. Thinking back on it, I think I caused all sorts of trouble at first.

But I soon got to like the place and the other girls. I got used to the routine. The staff were really good to me but Molly, she's great - she was like a mother to me. I'll never forget what she did for me. She was always checking how I felt about things and bringing me little gifts. Like this bracelet. God, I'm going to miss her so much.

I remember coming here to Dromore House. I think it was...eh...2002. After I had spent my first few months I began to feel much safer. More secure y'know. And it's hard to believe but I began taking an interest in school again. You see, I know I'm intelligent enough. And I can work hard. Anyway, I began to do very well. Besides, I really love music and maths. I always got an A in those subjects.

So I began studying for the Leaving Cert in June. I'll be eighteen in three months, on the 17th March. I know, I should be looking forward to it but here's the problem. The rules say I'm not entitled to stay in Dromore House because once I pass my eighteenth birthday I'll no longer be considered by law to be a child or a young person.

It seems like the authorities are not obliged to offer me the same protection once I, overnight, become an adult. I can't concentrate on studying at all. All I can think about is having to leave before I sit my Leaving Cert. It doesn't feel fair.

All the people involved with Dromore House wanted Molly to stay at least until then and had tried everything to help her. She, herself, had written to as many people in authority as she could think of. When everything failed, Molly had suggested that she have one last try by writing to the Ombudsman for Children's Office, but that was two months ago now.

Explore - Activity 5

Caitlín threw on her pullover and went down to the canteen for lunch. Afterwards, she played basketball with her friends Anna, Helen, Sinéad, and Adanna but her heart wasn't really in it. When study time came, instead of going to the library, as she usually would, she just sat under the big chestnut tree outside the kitchen and felt sorry for herself.

Caitlín was not to find out until the following week that Emily's staff had been working hard on the matter. They had pointed out to the Health Authorities that, while there was no obligation to continue offering a place to Caitlín, the Health Authorities did have the power to make a decision to allow her to stay. The Ombudsman for Children raised Caitlín's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and pointed out that a decision to remove her from Dromore House before she sat the Leaving Certificate was interfering here and now with her right to education because of the stress she was suffering.

The Health Authorities agreed that this was so and agreed to allow Caitlín to stay beyond her eighteenth birthday. They also agreed that there should be aftercare for Caitlín when she eventually left.

I was over the moon. So were all my friends and the staff. When we got the news, we had one of the best parties ever in Dromore House. Molly told me she would always be there for me.

I did really well in my Leaving Cert. and now, believe it or not, I'm studying computer science in UCC.

Now, when I look in the mirror, I don't cry.

And I hope that the success that Emily and her office had in solving my problem will help other young people like me.



NAME:

DATE:

Caitlín's Mirror

How long had Caitlín spent in Dromore House?

What is Dromore House?

Why do you think Caitlín was violent sometimes?

How did Molly help Caitlín?

When is Caitlín's birthday?

What exam was she studying for?

Why could she not concentrate on her studying?

Who does Caitlín think of as her family now?

What did the Ombudsman for Children do for Caitlín?

Make a list of things you would include in Caitlín's care programme after she leaves Dromore House:



Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

My Health and my Rights

Extension Activity 1

(SPHE, English)

TV FOR CHILDREN

- Introduce obesity sensitively and discuss responsibility in relation to it. Include children, parents and guardians, government, schools, sports associations and advertisers.
- Concentrate on the for profit sector with questions such as: do companies that target children have a responsibility?
- Discuss examples of the way advertising directed at children works.
- Following discussion, divide children into groups and inform them that they are to act as the management board of a children's TV company and draw up rules for advertisers who target children of their own age and younger. They should choose a chairperson and a secretary to record the rules. Some of the group might have roles as artists or sign-writers. A speaker from each group should report.
- Display work from the group activity.

Extension Idea 1

(English, Art)

WHO SAYS CHILDREN ARE LAZY?

- Group children and ask them to list all play and extra-curricular activities they participate in, which involve physical activity.
- Groups present their findings.
- Ask children for comments. Are they contributors or not to obesity?
- Children might finish by designing a poster on the theme.

Developing the Theme

(SPHE, English)

<http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/> - This website is a useful tool for enabling senior primary children to assess a website designed for children. They might like to write a commentary on its value to younger children.

Alternatively, they could do project work on a chosen topic.

N.B. - The website deals with health issues, but also with social and family issues such as how to deal emotionally with divorce. As always, teachers should check out the website to ensure it is appropriate to the children's development and learning requirements.

My Life is Now

Extension Activity 1

(Drama)

MEETING THE COUNCIL

- Show or read out *My Life is Now* to the children again. Ask the children to focus this time on the difference between Mark's view and the view of the Housing Section in the Council.
- Following discussion, ask the children to reflect on the issues further by completing the activity sheet.
- Once they have completed their activity sheets, ask the children to work together in small groups to prepare a role play in which Mark and his advocates (e.g. his mother and his doctors) meet Council officials and advisors (e.g. planners and architects). The role play of the meeting should be fun for the children, but also focus on the core issues.
- Conclude with a wrap-up discussion that supports the children to distil key points.

Extension Idea 1

(English)

ON THE CASE

This activity can be undertaken as a whole or small group task. Children should review *My Life is Now* with a view to providing as much information as possible in response to the following questions:

- What points do you think the Ombudsman for Children might make to the Council?

(If possible, facilitate the children to go to the Ombudsman for Children Office website, www.oco.ie, click on Your Rights and note the rights (articles) from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that the OCO might refer to in relation to Mark's case.)

- What recommendations do you think the OCO should make to the Council?
(Support the children to think about general recommendations relating to the Council's communications and procedures as well as any recommendations relating specifically to Mark's case.)
- The children's viewpoints should be recorded and included in the display built up during the main activities under a heading like 'Our Opinions and Ideas'.

Develop the Theme

(SPHE)

Facilitate the children to complete an access audit of a local public space, e.g. a local leisure centre, library, shopping centre or theatre. For information about criteria the children could use to conduct their assessment, visit the accessibility section of the National Disability Authority's website, www.nda.ie/.

My Life is Now

Here are some facts from my life.

I wake up every day. I have to be lifted out of bed. I can move around the house in my chair. My mother is my carer. My name is Mark. I'm sixteen. I have a progressive, disabling disease. It will get worse. Some people don't know how to communicate with me. Others are nervous to even try. It's no one's fault.

But I don't recognise this description of myself. These facts. They are all true but they don't come close to the truth.

There's another description of me I'm more comfortable with. It would take ages to describe that piece of work - the real me - the real Mark. I'm as complicated and as difficult to define as the real you. And as ordinary. Anyways, here are a few highlights.

I love good movies. I worry about global warming. My mind is always full. I support Newcastle United... unfortunately. When I dream, I am not locked in a physical body. I have a few great friends.

I am an exceptional judge of good bands - don't mind what my mate Hendo says. Chocolate eclairs? Heaven. My hormones are all over the shop. My body might be paralysed but my spirit is a gymnast. I'm in love with Hendo's sister - and I'm so not ready to tell her.

Let me tell you a quick story. We're living in a local authority house right?

You know the kind - two-up, two-down. It's fine. Good neighbours. Grand area. I'm living a normal life. Sports. Hangin' around. School. Apart from mam worrying too much sometimes, I'm able to control my life.

But things change. I get diagnosed with this progressive illness. Can't believe it. It gets worse and worse. My movement gets more restricted. I need a wheelchair. I need help all the time.

The house becomes a nightmare. I can't go upstairs without being carried. I can't go outside - there's no safe surface. The shower is impossible to use. There isn't enough room to get me from the bed into my chair. So many things. So many facts.

Just when all my mates are getting more independent, I'm getting more dependent.

Just when they are feeling freedom, I'm feeling trapped.

Me and my mam realise we can't live in that house anymore. The local authority is meant to provide proper housing for everyone. 'Everyone' includes people with a disability. So we get onto them.

They say they have a place - they're adapting it specially for us. Great, we think. We go see it. It isn't right. My illness means that my needs are changing. So, I need a place that'll be OK for me into the future. If we took that house, I would have been back to square one in no time.

Explore - Activity 7

We told them. But they wouldn't change their mind.

Fragments of replies 'in relation to your query of...', 'we are sorry to inform you', etc.

Take it or leave it. We didn't take it. But we didn't leave it either.

I don't need sympathy. I just wanted respect. So we asked for what was right and fair. My mam is not just my carer. She's my mother. And she's been my champion. We got into this long battle. Letters and more letters. Meetings. My doctors – my physiotherapist spoke up for me. Other experts wrote letters for me too.

All I have is my dignity. This is not about my disability. It's about my ability. My ability to control my life as much as I can. To make my own decisions. The authorities should help you do that – not stop you.

The Ombudsman for Children's Office received a complaint from Mark and his mam. They claimed his needs were not being met by the house offered. That his quality of life would be severely restricted. They also felt that their case was not being reviewed or treated fairly. Following an investigation, the OCO found that there was no evidence that the house had been adapted for Mark's specific needs and that their case wasn't dealt with fairly.

The OCO made a number of recommendations including that Mark's case be reviewed to find a suitable housing solution; that the local authority's way of dealing with cases like this be reviewed and improved. The local authority accepted the findings and recommendations were fair and accurate and set to work to make things better.

Mark:

The OCO made a big difference to my life. I'm sixteen now. We have a new place. It's just what I need. I have as much of my independence back as I can hope for.

My life is now. I can't rewind it and get back the time we spent fighting for fairness. Time is precious especially when you've an illness that's getting worse. The thing is, there are plenty other children and young adults like me. That's why I think it's so important that problems like this don't happen and if they do, they get solved quickly and efficiently. That days of being able to live as full a life as possible aren't stolen from you. And that people are treated with respect.

These were some facts from my life. And here's another one. An important one. I eventually got the courage to tell Hendo's sister I was in love with her. What a mistake.

The lads are not happy.

NAME:

DATE:

My Life is Now

Mark feels that his views weren't always taken seriously. Can you suggest why he thinks this?

The council offered Mark housing, but he didn't think it was suitable. Why?

Mark and his mum complained to the Ombudsman for Children's Office. What did the OCO have to say about Mark's case?

How did the Council respond to what the OCO said?

Is there anything the council could do differently to meet people's housing needs better?



Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Me, I'm Safe?

Extension Idea

(Art)

Facilitate the children to work in pairs or small groups to design a series of posters with key messages about what children can do if they are being bullied. Key messages and advice for children in this regard can be found on the website of Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College Dublin - www.abc.tcd.ie/school.html#8. The children could then be supported to display their posters throughout the school.

Develop the Theme

- The Anti-Bullying Centre, Trinity College Dublin is a good starting point for any further work you may wish to do on the theme of bullying. For information about the services provided to schools by the Centre, visit www.abc.tcd.ie/services or phone (01) 896 2573 / 896 3488.
- If you would like to do a project focused on cyberbullying, the [Get with it!](#) series of publications will help get you started. A joint initiative of the Office for Internet Safety, Barnardos, O2 and the National Council for Technology in Education (NCTE), these materials are available in the publications section of the Office for Internet Safety's website, www.internetsafety.ie.
- [ThinkB4UClick](#) is a resource by the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) and the NCTE. While it has been designed for use in the context of Junior Certificate CSPE, it may be a source of useful information and ideas if you would like to explore the issue of online privacy and associated rights and responsibilities with children. For more information, go to www.thinkb4uclick.ie.





