



## Notes on presentation for Politics and Society Leaving Certificate

### Slide 1: Children's rights and the role of the OCO

This presentation was developed by the Participation and Education Unit in the Ombudsman for Children's Office. It is about Children's Rights and the role of the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO).

The presentation is linked to the Politics and Society Curriculum: Strand 3 - Topic 5 Human Rights and responsibilities in Ireland.

### Slide 2: Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives from this presentation:

- To understand the role of the OCO
- To learn about children's rights and the UNCRC
- To know how the OCO protects and promotes children's rights.

### Slide 3: What is the OCO?

The Ombudsman for Children's Office is a human rights institution that works to protect the rights of children under the age of 18 living in Ireland.

Children don't have to be Irish to get help from the OCO – if they live in Ireland the OCO can help them.

### Slide 4: What is the role of the OCO?

The OCO has two main roles:

- to promote the rights and welfare of children and living in Ireland
- to deal with complaints made by or for children about the actions of public organisations

### Slide 5: What is the OCO?

Click on link for video. It is 2minutes 23 seconds long: [www.oco.ie/about-us/](http://www.oco.ie/about-us/)

### Slide 6: Things to remember

Independent – The OCO reports to the Oireachtas. The Oireachtas is made up of Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann and the President.

The OCO is not answerable to a minister or a political party. It does not matter who is in government the OCO can hold the government to account.

Impartial – The OCO does not take sides in complaints but weights up all the evidence and come to it's own conclusions.

### **Slide 7: Children's rights are human rights**

Human rights are basic rights and freedoms that people have from birth based on principles such as equality, dignity and respect.

This means that they are:

Inherent - to the human person: a person does not have to do anything to have them, you are born with rights

Inalienable - if something is inalienable it means that it may not be sold or parted with in any other way; except under specified circumstances, for example, liberty in respect of criminal offences

Universal - apply to all humans

Indivisible, interrelated and independent - The achievement or denial of any one right will impact on the achievement or denial of any other right. For example, the right to freedom of assembly will affect the right to express your culture, religion and language.

### **Slide 8: UN Convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC)**

The Convention has 54 articles made up of 42 rights. The rights can be divided into four groups.

Survival - Every child has the right to be alive and to have their basic needs met. These needs are food, water, shelter, healthcare, a name and a nationality.

Development - Every child, no matter who they are or where they were born, has the right to reach their full potential. This means they have the right to education and the right to develop their talents and abilities.

Protection - Every child has the right to feel safe, to be protected from harm and to be cared for. The UNCRC also recognises that there are children in the world that need special protection, such as refugee children, because they live in very difficult circumstances.

Participation - Every child has the right to be involved in decisions that are made about them and to express themselves freely.

It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

Ireland ratified the UNCRC in 1992 and by doing so made a commitment under international law to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights under the Convention for all children under 18 living in Ireland.

In Geneva, there is a UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is made up of an elected group of experts from many different countries. All 196 countries must send regular reports on the status

of children's rights in their countries. The Committee members review these reports and make recommendations on things that could be improved.

Ireland last submitted a report in 2016 and will submit their next report in 2021.

### **Slide 9: General Principles**

The four general principles of the Convention are considered necessary for the achievement of all other children's rights. If these are not achieved then the achievement of all other children's rights are weakened. The general principals are referenced in Articles 2, 3, 6 12 of the UNCRC.

**Article 2** Non-Discrimination - All children have rights no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or a girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are gay or straight, whether they are rich or poor. There are laws in Ireland to make sure children are not discriminated against.

For example: The majority of Irish schools can no longer refuse a child a place based on their religion.

**Article 3** - is also known as the best interest principle this means that it's the child's right that when adults make decisions about them, they think about what is best for the child. They should think about how their decisions affect children. This is in also included in the constitution since the Children's Referendum in 2012.

For example: In family court, judges must make decisions while considering what is in the child's best interest.

**Article 6** - is the child's right to life survival and development. This is, of course, one of the most basic rights in the Convention but again is linked to other rights such as access to health care, birth registration, family life or alternative care, protection from all forms of harm etc.

**Article 12** - is possibly, in recent times at least, one of the most often quoted rights of the child. It is the child's right to express their views and for their views to be taken into account when decisions are being made that affect them. This right doesn't mean adults need to always do what the child says but it does mean they should ask and consider the child's views as it is important. Children must be able to form a view on the matter at hand and be given enough information to help them do so. The child's age and understanding of the situation must be taken into account when their views are considered and weight attached to them. For many children views can be expressed through play or art or other means and it is up to adults to make sure these methods are available to them and can be understood.

For example: The Irish Secondary-Level Students Union gives support to student councils and is also a platform for students to express their views on issues about education.

### **Slide 10: How does the OCO promote and protect children's rights?**

- Promote awareness of children's rights through the rights awareness education. The Office runs education workshops for schools and youth organisations
- Consult and listen to children and highlight their concerns

- Advise the government on policy and laws affecting children
- Encourage public organisations to promote children's rights in the work that they do
- Take complaints made by or on behalf of children about the actions of public services
- Communicate and help people understand the OCO's views on issues relating to children's rights.
- The OCO also carries out research to get a better understanding of issues that are important in children's lives

### **Slide 11: Participation and Rights Awareness and Education Programme**

The rights awareness and education work involves a number of parts.

The OCO produce resource materials for schools and in 2018 they launched a new pack of educational materials for teachers to use with all classes from Junior Infants to 6th Years: Click on link for senior cycle resource: [www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2017/12/MakingChildrensRightsReal\\_TY-Senior-Cycle.pdf](http://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2017/12/MakingChildrensRightsReal_TY-Senior-Cycle.pdf)

The participation and rights education unit run a programme of education workshops for primary and secondary schools where groups of children come to the Office and the team provides information on children's rights and do rights based activities.

The participation and rights education unit also deliver lectures and workshops to third level students who plan to work with children as trainee teachers, social workers and social care workers.

The OCO has developed a website – It's Your Right – which is aimed at educating children about their rights. Click on link: [www.oco.ie/itsyourright/](http://www.oco.ie/itsyourright/)

There is a game on It's your Right website called 'Rights Runner' to see how much you know about rights. (Useful revision tool!)

### **Slide 12: Children's Participation**

Participation work is about hearing children's views and using this to influence the office's own work as well as the practice and policy of public organisations.

Recent projects include children's experiences of in-patient mental health care and the experiences of children living in Direct Provision accommodation. See the most recent report into Direct Provision at: [www.oco.ie/directdivision/](http://www.oco.ie/directdivision/)

The OCO also produce participation resources. Click on link: [www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2018/12/OCO\\_Participation-Guidelines\\_English\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2018/12/OCO_Participation-Guidelines_English_WEB.pdf)

The OCO offer help and support to other organisations who want to hear children's views and experiences.

### **Slide 13: Policy research & Communications**

Policy and Research - Advise the government on policy and laws affecting children.

The Policy and Research team carry out research on children's rights issues to ensure that the Ombudsman and the rest of the OCO team are briefed on international human rights standards.

For an example of policy and research work click on link:

[www.oco.ie/library/oco-observations-on-role-of-religion-in-school-admissions/](http://www.oco.ie/library/oco-observations-on-role-of-religion-in-school-admissions/)

Communications - Raising public awareness of Children's Rights issues through events such as Child Talks. Child Talks is an annual event marking World Children's Day that features a number of children sharing important stories about their lives, which highlight a children's rights issue that is important to them.

#### **Slide 14: Complaints and Investigations**

The OCO's complaints and investigations team is responsible for this part of the work. Public services are any organisation that is funded by the government.

Some examples include schools, health services, hospitals, Tusla, or any government department.

The Office looks into complaints about services for children paid for by the Government like schools or hospitals or family supports.

The OCO provide a free, independent and impartial service. This means that the OCO does not take sides. They want to find out what has happened and, if necessary, how it can be fixed.

Here is a link to case studies or examples of complaints that the office have got in the past:

[www.oco.ie/complaints/case-studies/](http://www.oco.ie/complaints/case-studies/)

#### **Slide 15: Emily's Case Study**

Emily was a 6-year-old wheelchair user. She had grown out of her old wheelchair and needed a new one. Emily's mother had tried to get a new wheelchair from the HSE but was told again and again that there was no money to buy one.

When the OCO contacted the HSE they told us that the demand for things like wheelchairs far exceeds the budget available. In Emily's area there were 132 children waiting for wheelchairs and other essential equipment.

Although Emily was high priority there was still not enough money to buy her new chair. After the OCO got involved Emily got her new wheelchair as the HSE looked at their budget and made savings in other areas. This was good news for Emily for there were still other children waiting too long on for equipment.

From this case study you can see it is important that people make complaints to the OCO because if they don't know about a problem that is affecting a child the office cannot help them.

#### **Slide 16: Summary**

To recap on important points to remember from the presentation:

1. Children's rights are human rights and are protected under the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

2. The UNCRC has **54** articles and **42** rights
3. The OCO works to **promote** and **protect** the rights of all children living in Ireland through:
  - ✓ **rights education** and **awareness programmes**
  - ✓ **consultation** with children to highlight their views
  - ✓ a free and independent **complaints service**
  - ✓ **advising** the Government on policy and legislation
  - ✓ **raising public awareness**

### Slide 17: Contact the Ombudsman for Children's Office

There are a number of different ways to contact the office:

Email: [oco@oco.ie](mailto:oco@oco.ie)

Online complaint form: [www.oco.ie/complaints/make-a-complaint/online-complaint-form/](http://www.oco.ie/complaints/make-a-complaint/online-complaint-form/)

Freephone :1800 20 20 40

Post: 52-56 Great Strand Street Dublin 1

Social media:

[www.twitter.com/oco\\_ireland](https://www.twitter.com/oco_ireland)

[www.instagram.com/ombudsmanforchildren/](https://www.instagram.com/ombudsmanforchildren/)

[www.facebook.com/OCOIreland/](https://www.facebook.com/OCOIreland/)

[www.youtube.com/user/OCOIreland](https://www.youtube.com/user/OCOIreland)

### Slide 18 Any questions?

If you have any questions on this presentation you can contact us on [education@oco.ie](mailto:education@oco.ie) or visit [oco.ie](http://oco.ie)

### Further study

- Short video on what is the UNCRC (OCO)  
[www.oco.ie/childrens-rights/un-convention/](http://www.oco.ie/childrens-rights/un-convention/)
- List of all articles under the UNCRC (OCO)  
[www.oco.ie/childrens-rights/un-convention/summary-un-convention-rights-child/](http://www.oco.ie/childrens-rights/un-convention/summary-un-convention-rights-child/) (OCO)
- Report from OCO for complaints case study (OCO)  
[www.oco.ie/library/molly-two-years-on/](http://www.oco.ie/library/molly-two-years-on/)
- Report from OCO on Children's views and experiences living in Direct Provision (OCO)  
[www.oco.ie/directdivision/direct-division-report/](http://www.oco.ie/directdivision/direct-division-report/)
- Report from OCO on Young Peoples Experiences of Mental Health Services (OCO)  
[www.oco.ie/MentalHealthReport\\_2018.pdf](http://www.oco.ie/MentalHealthReport_2018.pdf)
- Report from OCO on Children's views and experiences of living in Family Hubs (OCO)  
[www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2019/04/No-Place-Like-Home.pdf](http://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2019/04/No-Place-Like-Home.pdf)

- Video on Human rights and what are indivisible rights (Amnesty International)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ew993Wdc0zo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ew993Wdc0zo)
- Children’s rights referendum case study (Politics -Society Podcast, Dr Jerome Devitt, The Kings Hospital school, Palmerstown, Dublin 20  
[www.polsocpodcast.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/childrens-referendum-case-study-upload-version.pdf](http://www.polsocpodcast.files.wordpress.com/2020/03/childrens-referendum-case-study-upload-version.pdf)
- Politics and Society Podcast (Dr Jerome Devitt, The Kings Hospital school, Palmerstown, Dublin 20  
[www.polsocpodcast.com/2020/05/29/some-pol-soc-ideas-to-keep-you-going-over-the-summer/](http://www.polsocpodcast.com/2020/05/29/some-pol-soc-ideas-to-keep-you-going-over-the-summer/)