

Mind the Gap

Barriers to the realisation of the rights
of children with disabilities in Ireland

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Easy to Read Summary

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Mind the Gap: Easy to Read Summary



The Ombudsman for Children's Office asked researchers at NUI Galway to write this report.



The report looks at the rights children with disabilities have.



It looked at the reasons why children with disabilities are not treated fairly or do not have the same chances as non-disabled children.



In the report we wrote down some ideas for how the law could change to fix this.



In this report when we say children with disabilities we mean lots of different children and groups.

So we mean



children who have used mental health services



children who have a physical disability (wheelchair users, people with limited mobility or people whose arms or legs don't work in the same way as other people)



neurodiverse or autistic children



children who are blind, have low vision, deaf or hard of hearing and lots of others.



The report is split up into different parts. Each part looks at different rights for children with disabilities.

The parts are about



- school and play



- families, housing and transport





- health and welfare



- justice and redress.



We also picked out some things which we think affect all these parts and wrote about them separately.

These are



- equality or being treated the same



- participation or having your say



- accessibility or making it easy to get to things or take part



Right now, lots of laws, policies, and services just talk about disabled adults or non-disabled children and young people.



They don't talk about children with disabilities.



This report will help the people who make the law to fix this and do a better job at making sure children with disabilities have the same rights as other children.

What we Found Out

Children are invisible:



We found that lots of laws, policies and services made for children don't think about the children with disabilities.



Some laws and programmes made to help people with disabilities only think about or help adults with disabilities.



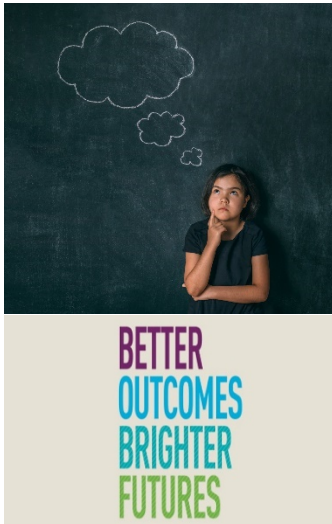
They do not think about children with disabilities who might need different kinds of help.



For example the Assisted Decision-Making Capacity Act is a law about making decisions and getting help when you have to decide something important.



It only applies to adults with disabilities.



Children cannot get any help to decide things under that law even though children and young people have to decide important things too.

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures is a plan to make sure Ireland is a good place to live for children and young people.



It does not talk about children with disabilities much.



It does not talk about their rights or the type of help they would need.



We are worried that they did not think children with disabilities were important enough to put into the plan.

Children do not have a say:



Children with disabilities are often not asked what they think about laws, policies and services that affect them.



It is important to ask children with disabilities what they think.



It is not hard to do this if you make a plan for how children can take part.



Children with disabilities are not all the same.



They might need different things to help them take part.



Some plans talk about how important it is to talk to children with disabilities but they do not tell people how to do this or what they can do to make it easy for people to take part.

Children are not counted:



We don't have enough information on children with disabilities and what we have is very old.



People disagree on what it means to have a disability, so sometimes the information on children with disabilities can be hard to find.



When we don't have enough information on children with disabilities it is hard to support them in the right way.



There is still not enough information on how many children with disabilities are;

- in school or learning at different levels within schools.



- on waiting lists for mental health appointments,



- waiting to have their needs checked so that they get the proper support under the Disability Act.

Changes needed:



Children with disabilities have specific needs which are usually forgotten because no one asks what they think.

We found that laws and policies focus either on children in general, or adults with disabilities. They don't think about children with disabilities.

To fix this we need to change the laws we have while thinking about children with disabilities.



When we make new laws or change the law or policy, we must talk to children with disabilities first.



We have to make sure that all children with disabilities can take part and we need to make it easy for them to do this.



Children with disabilities are not all the same.



They might need different things to help them take part.



Asking children with disabilities what they think may take more time and cost more, but it is very important.



People doing this should ask children with disabilities and their families what would make it easier for them to understand or take part.



People doing this should have lots of different ways for children with disabilities to take part.



Government departments and other bodies should do all these things when getting information and talking to children with disabilities.

Conclusion:



Children with disabilities have many problems and we did not have space to talk about how to fix all of them in this report.

We did write down some ideas for how to change things in the report.



We hope this report will help people to talk more about how to make these changes.



Government needs to work harder to protect the rights of children with disabilities in their daily lives.

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