

# Pieces of Us: What's Next?

Report of a Children's Conference on the Concluding  
Observations of the United Nations Committee on the  
Rights of the Child to Ireland



Youth  
Advisory  
Panel



ombudsman  
do leanaí  
for children



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## Message from Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children

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In 2021 and 2022, my office prepared and submitted a comprehensive Children's Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee). This was a key part of the commentary to the Committee on how Ireland was promoting and protecting children's rights and what more needed to be done. This report, *Pieces of Us*, was based on 5,500 completed questionnaires by children aged 2 to 17 years and 23 focus groups involving 200 children. It was written and designed with our Youth Advisory Panel (YAP).



In February 2023, the Committee issued its Concluding Observations to Ireland. These are a set of recommendation on how the State can further promote, protect and fulfil children's rights. Having submitted *Pieces of Us* to the Committee and discussed it with Government ministers and senior Irish policy makers, the YAP decided that they wanted to go back to the children of Ireland to hear their views on the Concluding Observations and what needed to be prioritised now.

In July 2023, we held a children's conference on the Concluding Observations. Hosted and facilitated by our YAP, over 100 children from across Ireland came together to consider the Committee's recommendations and give their views on what needed to be prioritised to meet these recommendations. As has always been our experience, children were not short of ideas about how their lives could be improved.

This report, *Pieces of Us – What's Next?* presents their views on how some of the Committee's Concluding Observations can be actioned by the State. These range from changes in teacher training, to more widely accessible leisure facilities and also community events to tackle discrimination. Some of their recommendations require considerable investment and systemic change; others need more minor adjustments to how we currently do things.

Only children live and experience a child's life in Ireland today. This gives a weight and reality to their views that only they can bring. In moving forward in the promotion, protection and fulfilment of their rights, the value of this cannot be overstated. I hope, therefore, that appropriate weight is given to their views and recommendations as expressed in this report.



I would like to thank Professor Philip Jaffé, member of the Committee, for attending and speaking at this children's conference. His presence, input and availability to the children added a very real sense that there are those at very senior levels who understand the importance of children's voices. I would also like to thank all of the organisations who facilitated children to attend this conference from all corners of Ireland. I want to give a huge thank you to all of the children who came and shared their views with us. This is always voluntary on your part and I really appreciate you giving us your time and thoughts.

I also have to thank all of the great staff in the Ombudsman for Children's Office who did Trojan work to make this event happen. Finally, to our own Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) members who worked very hard on this conference with us. As always, they took up the challenges and roles involved and delivered on these with impressive skill and obvious passion and commitment.



Dr Niall Muldoon



# PIECES OF US

A CHILDREN'S REPORT to the UN COMMITTEE on the RIGHTS

## WELCOME

13 MEMBERS of YAP in GENEVA



KAROLINA



MEABH

5700 CHILDREN gave us their FEEDBACK

WE ARE because we  
YOU TO GOVERNMENT to PRIORITY

YOU HAVE the RIGHT to TELL DECISION-MAKERS YOUR OPINIONS.

200 YOUNG PEOPLE in FOCUS GROUPS

THINK ABOUT... THE FUTURE YOU YOUR SISTERS & BROTHERS



DR. NIALL MULDOON

THANK to the WORK



ombudsman do leanai for children



Youth Advisory Panel

# WHAT NEXT?

CROKE PARK

21<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2023

of the CHILD

HERE  
want  
TELL the  
ENT what  
CRITISE!

YOUR FRIENDS  
K YOU  
he  
of the YAP

 YOUR REPORT  
is the VOICE  
of 1.5m CHILDREN

WE ASKED the  
IRISH GOVERNMENT  
WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING  
TO IMPROVE the  
LIVES of CHILDREN  
in IRELAND



PHILIP JAFFE  
UN COMMITTEE  
on the RIGHTS  
of the CHILD



WE GRILLED the  
MINISTER for  
6 hours.

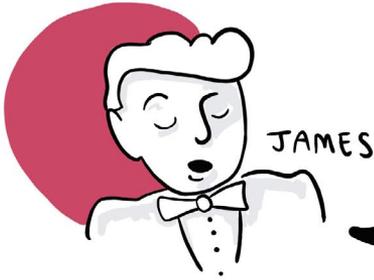
THIS OPPORTUNITY  
only comes around  
EVERY 6 YEARS

...A PERSON IS A  
**SOLIDARITY**  
PERSON THROUGH PEOPLE



# KEY THEMES:

## EDUCATION



why  
HAS the LEAVING  
CERT STILL NOT  
BEEN REFORMED?



YOUNG PEOPLE CAN  
FEEL ISOLATED.



“WHERE ARE  
the SUPPORTS?”

THEY FEEL SERVICES  
are not THERE for  
CHILDREN with DISABILITIES  
AND/OR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

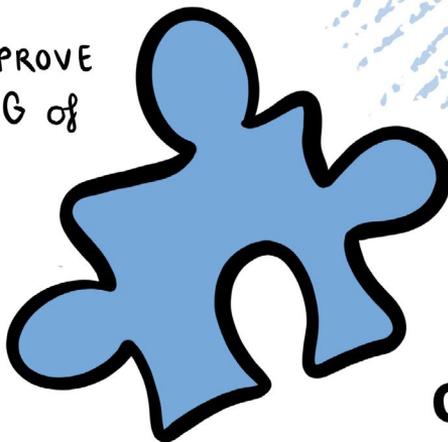


## SERVICES

MENTAL  
HEALTH  
SERVICES  
are the



! WE MUST IMPROVE  
the TEACHING of  
CHILDREN'S  
RIGHTS in  
SCHOOLS

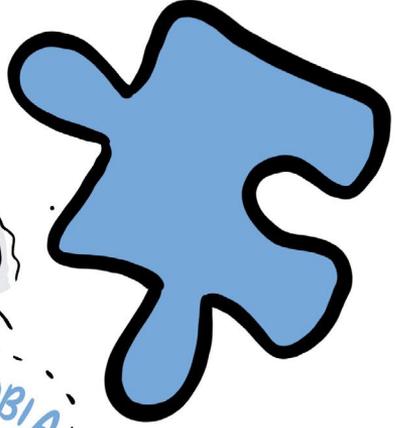
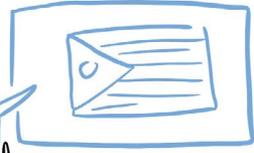


POOR  
MENTAL  
HEALTH  
AFFECTS EVERY  
ASPECT of a  
CHILD'S LIFE



LIST  
LIST  
LIST  
WAITING  
-LIST-  
ASSESSMENT  
of NEED

EDUCATION and  
TRAINING is  
NEEDED to  
COMBAT THIS  
DISCRIMINATION



TRANSPARENT  
RING-FENCED  
SERVICES

LGBTQI+



RACISM



TRANSPHOBIA

from  
PEERS  
and  
TEACHERS!

ICES

AL  
TH  
ES  
BIGGEST  
SSUE

EQUALITY and  
DISCRIMINATION

WE STILL FACE  
OUTDATED  
STEREOTYPES  
BEING APPLIED TO US

WHAT DO  
YOU THINK?  
?



WHAT WOULD HELP  
COMBAT DISCRIMINATION  
in SCHOOLS?

# KEY THEMES:



TIM

COMMUNITIES and  
THE  
RIGHT TO  
PLAY!  
LEISURE  
IS  
ESSENTIAL



CHILDREN in  
RURAL AREAS  
DON'T HAVE EASY  
ACCESS to SPORT and  
PLAY FACILITIES

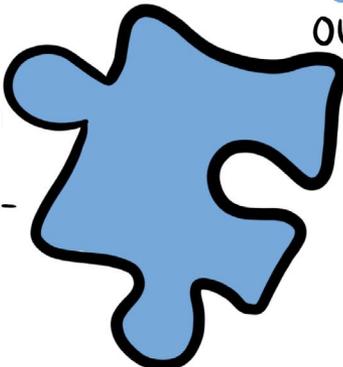
"MY COMMUNITY  
IS NOT DESIGNED  
to INCLUDE ME"

CHILDREN  
MEAN  
PARENTS  
SHOULD  
e  
IN C



CHILDREN in  
URBAN AREAS  
OFTEN FEEL  
UNSAFE in  
OUTDOOR  
SPACES

"WE GET MOVED  
ON FOR LOITERING  
BY the GARDAI"

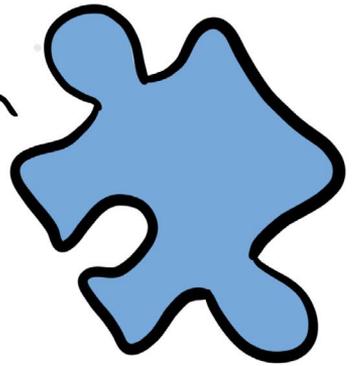
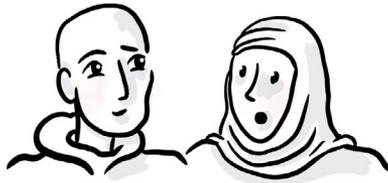


MIA

LISTEN!  
AND THEN -

ACTION

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS  
NEED to be UNDERSTOOD



LISTENING to our  
VOICES  
NOT A TICK-BOX  
ACTIVITY

TRAVELLER CHILDREN  
VALUE LIVING



THESE CHILDREN  
want

STABILITY

and

SAFETY

ON-SITE WITH THEIR  
EXTENDED FAMILY  
BUT

FACE INADEQUATE  
SERVICES



CHILDREN'S VOICES

MEANINGFUL  
PARTICIPATION  
SHOULD START  
early  
CHILDHOOD.....

THEN MANY  
PROBLEMS  
COULD BE  
PREVENTED

TAKE  
ACTION!



CIARÁN

SPECIAL PROTECTIONS

WHAT ARE THE GOVERNMENT  
DOING to PROTECT CHILDREN  
AGAINST HOMELESS-  
NESS

# 1. Introduction

---

Ireland signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1991. By doing so, the State made a commitment to promote and protect all of the rights in the UNCRC for all children in Ireland. The State also agreed to report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) on how law, policy and provision was meeting this commitment approximately every five years.

Ireland last reported to the Committee in 2016. As part of that reporting process, Ireland's Children's Rights Alliance (CRA) and UNICEF Ireland worked with children and young people to produce a Children's Report called *Picture Your Rights*.<sup>1</sup> Ireland (also called the State in this report) reported to the Committee again in 2022. This time, the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) undertook to produce a Children's Report for the Committee.

The OCO was set up under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002 (as amended) and the office opened its doors in 2004. The Office is an independent, statutory body with two main functions:

- to investigate complaints made by, or on behalf of children about poor administration by public bodies that have an adverse effect on a child or children; and
- to raise awareness, promote, protect and uphold the rights of children under the UNCRC.

The OCO undertakes a lot of different work to meet these functions. They include a free, impartial and independent complaints service, advice to Government on policy and legislation, research on issues affecting and of concern to children, and activities to raise awareness of children's rights and the UNCRC among children, adults and the general public. They also include consultations with children and external stakeholders, and participative initiatives with children designed to elevate their voices and views and increase their involvement in decision-making.

## 1.2 Background to the Children's Report to the UN Committee, *Pieces of Us*

With support from a number of organisations that work with and for children, the OCO commissioned a survey of children between April and May 2021. Over 5,500 children responded to this survey and told us what they like, do not like and would change

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions\\_reports/files/PictureYourRights0515.pdf](https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/PictureYourRights0515.pdf)

about life in Ireland. Between May 2021 and March 2022 we facilitated 200 children to take part in focus groups about the issues facing them as children. These included some particularly vulnerable children such as children who were in detention, Traveller and Roma children, children with disabilities and children in care.

Having collected all of this data, the OCO worked closely with its Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) on the analysis of the information, identifying key themes and putting together a comprehensive report, video and gallery of artwork. This can all be seen at <https://www.oco.ie/pieces-of-us/>.

### **1.3 Meeting with members of the Committee: the Children's Meeting**

A key part of reporting to the Committee is the Children's Meeting. This is where children meet with members of the Committee and put forward their issues and the questions that they would like the Committee to put to the State. In September 2022, the OCO YAP travelled to Geneva to meet with members of the Committee as part of the Children's Meeting. The key issues raised were those included in the *Pieces of Us* report. These were:

- Early years services
- Education
- Discrimination
- Services that support children, including health and mental health services and child protection and welfare
- Community and leisure
- Children's voice
- Children in need of special protections, including children in detention and asylum-seeking and refugee children

### **1.4 The Committee's meeting with the State representatives**

In January 2022, the Committee met with and questioned the State on how Ireland's laws, policies and services are working to promote and protect the rights of children. This was done through meetings with representatives from government departments and agencies, including the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), the Department of Justice, the Department of Education and the Department of Health. Many other organisations, including the OCO, attended to watch and listen to these meetings.

## 1.5 The Concluding Observations of the Committee to Ireland

In February 2022, the Committee issued their Concluding Observations to Ireland. The Concluding Observations are recommendations to the State about how they could do better in promoting and protecting children's rights. The Concluding Observations are long and detailed. The OCO has written a more child friendly version of the Concluding Observations that are important to the key themes in *Pieces of Us*. These are in Appendix 1 of this report.

## 1.6 The Children's Conference: *Pieces Of Us – What's Next?*

The OCO YAP attended the Children's Meeting in Geneva and presented their report to members of the Committee. In January 2023, the YAP hosted a discussion forum with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Minister of State for Law Reform, Department of Justice and senior decision-makers from a number of departments and government agencies. This gave an opportunity for the YAP to put the findings in the *Pieces of Us* report and their questions and concerns to those with the power to make decisions and influence positive change for children.

Having put the findings and their concerns and questions to adults at the international and national level, the YAP wanted to go back to children like those who took part in the survey and focus groups for the *Pieces of Us* report. When the Committee published their recommendations (Concluding Observations) to Ireland in February 2023, this provided a very clear focus for a children's event.

Over the next few months, the OCO Participation and Rights Education team worked closely with the YAP to plan the *Pieces of Us – What's Next?* children's conference. This took place in Croke Park on 21st July, 2023. Over 130 children aged 12 to 17 attended this event. Most of these were supported by their organisations, including Foróige, Comhairle na nÓg, Tusla and a number of local youth groups and projects. Children came from all parts of the country, with many coming from marginalised and disadvantaged groups including asylum-seeking children, Traveller and Roma children, disabled children and children in care.

Two OCO YAP members hosted the event. In the morning, the Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon, and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child member, Dr Philip Jaffé, gave their thoughts on the day, the importance of hearing children's views and the Concluding Observations. Following this, YAP members took to the stage to let the audience know about the key themes in the *Pieces of Us* report, the relevant Concluding Observations, and the questions that they wanted the children to think about in the afternoon.

After lunch, the children all took part in a World Café. This is a way for a large group of people to talk about different topics. There were twelve tables in the Café: two tables on each of the following themes:

- Education, including early years
- Discrimination
- Services that support children, including health and mental health services and child protection and welfare
- Community and leisure
- Children's voice
- Children in need of special protections, including children in detention and asylum-seeking and refugee children

Children had the opportunity to sit at three tables and talk about three themes for 20 minutes each. There was a facilitator (mostly YAP members) and a note taker at each of the tables to promote discussion and capture what children had to say. Children could write or draw their views on the paper tablecloths on the tables. The questions for each table were placed in the centre to help focus the discussions.

We asked all of the adults who were not either facilitators or note takers in the World Café to leave the room. This was to allow the discussion to take place among the children with as little adult presence as possible.

The conference wrapped up with final comments from the Ombudsman for Children and Dr Philip Jaffé and their answers to questions by the children.

## **1.7 Report of The Children's Conference**

The OCO gathered together all of the tablecloths with children's views and ideas on them and all of the notes taken by the note takers. We have worked closely with our YAP to analyse this information and to produce this report. It sets out children's recommendations for change and their priorities over the coming years on the key themes discussed.

# EDUCATION

IS FOR

EVERYBODY



cutwork  
Load



for  
Leaving Cert  
students

Just because  
Someone has  
Less money

EDUCATION  
is for students  
not for children

doesn't mean

Children Should be  
taken out of School

DIFFICULT FOR  
TRAVELLERS  
to even get  
into School

i Live  
Here  
NO  
ADDRESS  
NO EMAIL



# TION



Stop giving out to you for not knowing things... that's why you go to school... to learn...

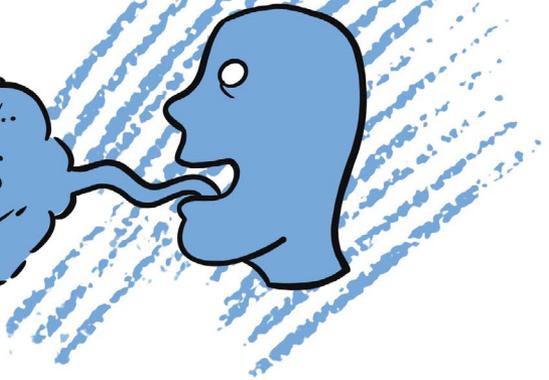
**Religion:**  
Lack of proper  
Teacher  
Training



Increase the number of S.N.A.s in Schools



Well being.. we need DOSS classes...



We need more GUIDANCE COUNSELORS in Schools who are TRAINED in MENTAL HEALTH.



## 2. Education

---

At the World Café education tables, the first question that children were asked to consider was:

*“What can the government and schools do to make sure that every child – including disabled children, Traveller and Roma children, disadvantaged children and migrant children - can have a good education?”*

The children’s recommendations can be divided into:

- Curriculum reform
- Teacher training
- Increased support services
- Investment in accessible facilities

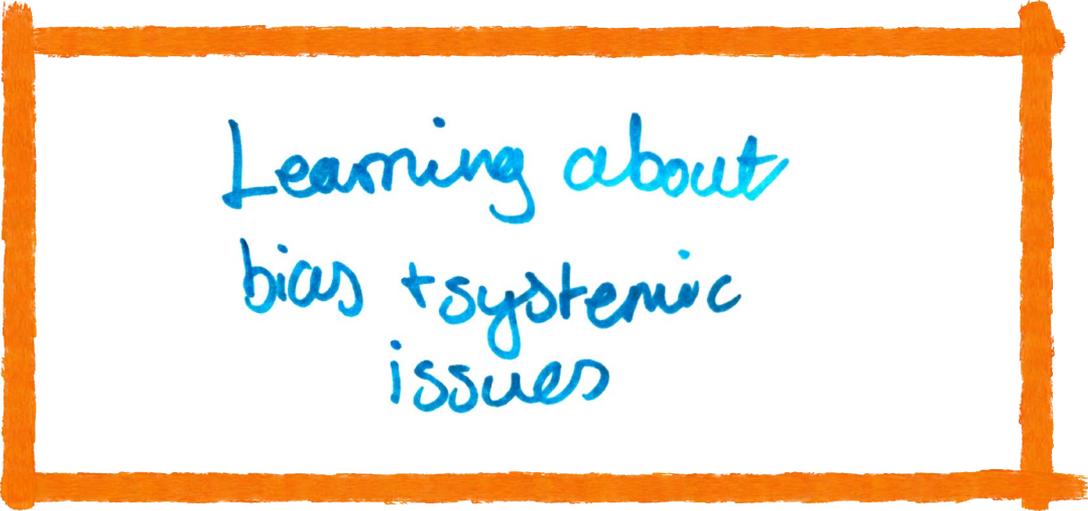
### 2.1 Curriculum reform

The children involved in World Café discussions believed that inclusion of disabled children, Traveller and Roma children, disadvantaged children and migrant children begins with educating other children about them. Several children recommended incorporating this into their Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) curriculum.

Ensure C.S.P.E is used correctly  
so that education is given on  
disability, and other minority  
groups

*“Ensure CSPE is used correctly so that education is given on disability and other minority groups.”*

Children also recommended that the curriculum covered structural inequality and prejudice.



Learning about  
bias + systemic  
issues

*“Learning about bias and systemic issues.”*

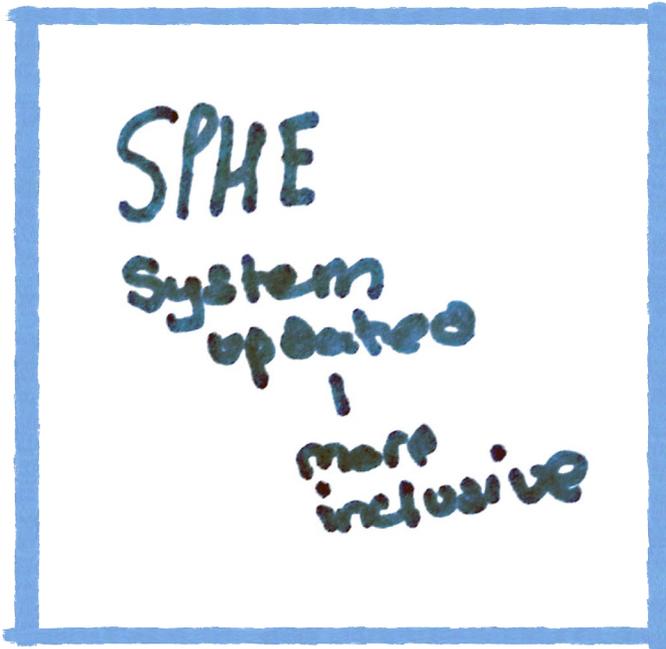
Additionally, children also recommended that their curriculum educated them on how to step in, speak up and support others when they witness or are a victim of misogyny, discrimination or racism.



Education on bystander  
intervention

*“Education on bystander intervention.”*

Many children believed that the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum also needs reform. They believed that the current curriculum was not inclusive of LGBTI+ student experiences.



*“SPHE system updated, more inclusive.”*

*Child 1: “SPHE is an issue. There is not enough knowledge about it. It is not taught properly, they don’t give you enough learning, such as sexuality. I don’t know enough about it, and I know my teacher doesn’t know enough about it either.”*

*Child 3: “In our class we saw a video of men and woman’s hygiene, and that was it. We didn’t get to talk about it, for instance, LGBTQ sex, etc., we know nothing about it.”*

*Child 1: “Yeah, we only learn about straight sex.”*

## **2.2 Teacher training**

The discussions in the World Café frequently identified improved teacher training as a way to increase inclusion and ensure that disabled children, Traveller and Roma children, disadvantaged children and migrant children have a good education. Many children recommended that teachers should have more cultural awareness training so that they are able to support children from minority backgrounds.

Teachers  
Should be  
educated in  
different cultures

"Teachers should be educated in different cultures."

Q1  
Mandate educating school staff  
on different cultures & different  
lifestyles that children live, e.g.  
Roma + Traveller communities so  
staff are better equipped to  
work with all kinds of students.  
I think this will also create safer  
school communities

and how to  
respect them

"Mandate educating school staff on different cultures and different lifestyles that children live and how to respect them, e.g. Roma and Traveller communities, so staff are better equipped to work with all kinds of students. I think this will also create safer school communities."

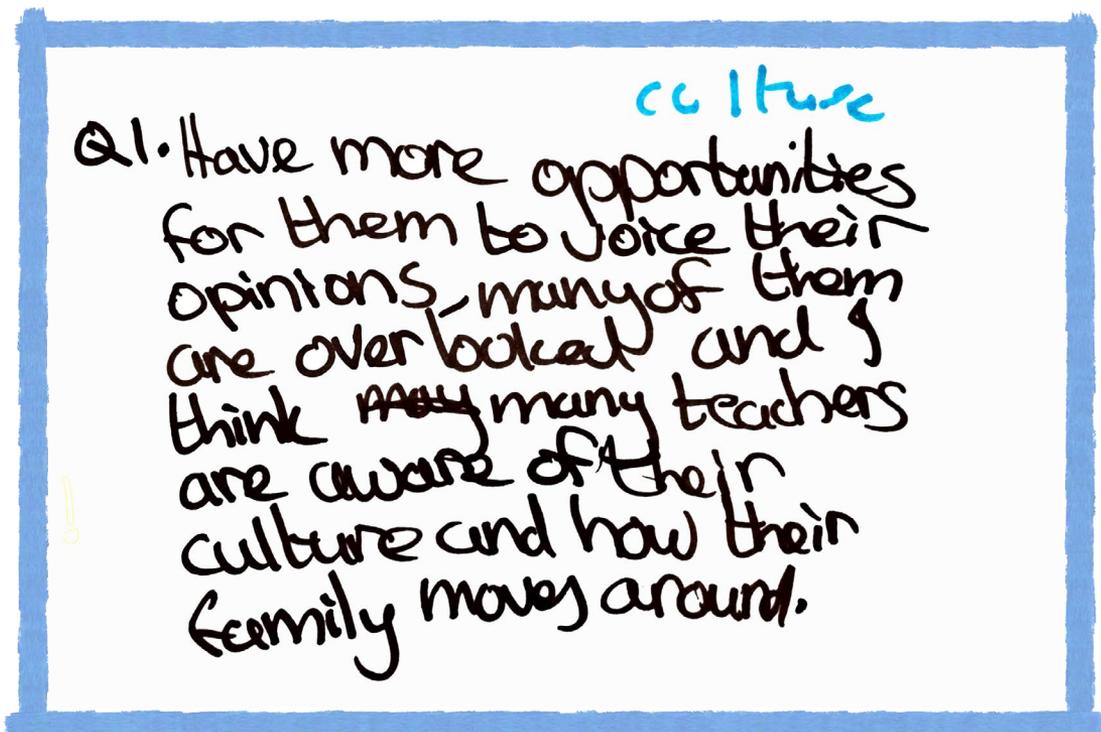
Children believed that their teachers' bias against Travellers was a big issue in their schools, emphasising the importance of cultural awareness.

*Child 1: "Travellers they have a certain culture, we need to respect that culture, we need to know about their culture... Some teachers in my schools have views that I don't agree with, and these views bleed into class... but they don't understand enough about different cultures... they're saying all of these things and they may say something insulting to Travellers without understanding it."*

*Child 6: "Some friends of mine have said they don't feel safe when teachers are doing that. Teachers should take a course where they learn about different cultures, countries, so you are aware of students in your class."*

*Child 4: "There needs to be a better way to report to the teacher, or to report a teacher... particularly in relation to issues about racism, female/male interactions, etc. It needs to be dealt with a better way."*

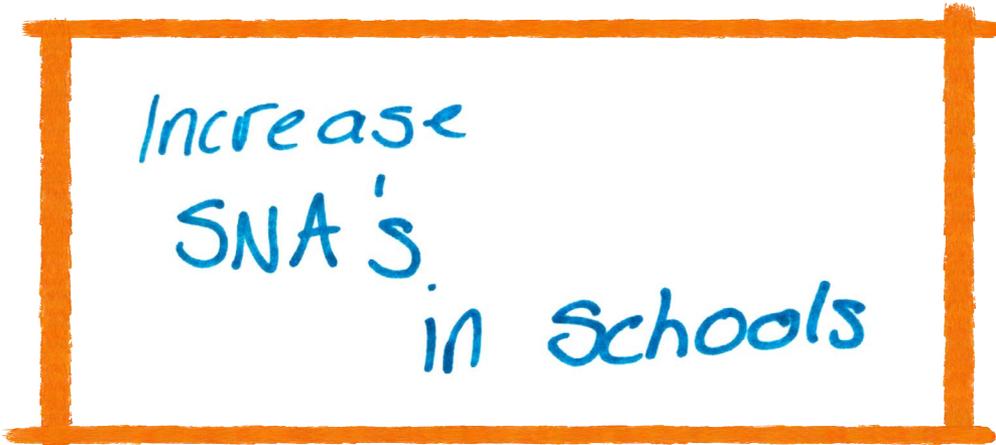
Other children suggested that giving Traveller children a way to express their opinions in school would ensure their right to a good education.



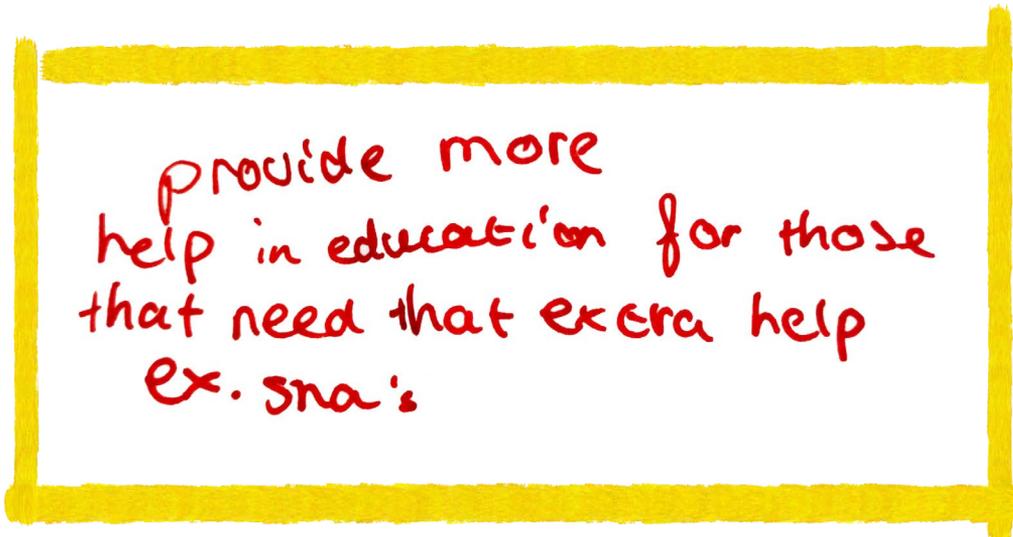
*"Have more opportunities for them to voice their opinions, many of them are overlooked and I think that many teachers are aware of their culture and how their family moves around."*

### 2.3 Increased support services

Increased disability services and supports in school, particularly the need for more Special Needs Assistants (SNAs), were recommended to ensure that children had a good education.



*"Increase SNAs in schools."*



*"Provide more help in education for those that need extra help, example: SNAs."*

Some children recommended that everyone should learn Irish Sign Language in school so that they could communicate and include their peers who are deaf or hearing-impaired. They believed that this would ensure that children with disabilities got a good education.

seconded!  
↓  
ISL in School

"ISL in school."

## 2.4 Investment in accessible facilities

The children at the World Café recommended investment in accessible facilities within their schools. These facilities ranged from more wheelchair accessible schools to having sensory rooms for children with autism and sensory processing issues. They believed that this would help children access education and make it more inclusive.

More inclusivity e.g.:  
Proper accessibility  
More SNA's  
Culture  
Ethnicities

"More inclusivity e.g.: proper accessibility."

Sensory rooms in all schools.

"Sensory rooms in all schools."

More sensory/safe  
rooms/places

"More  
sensory/  
safe rooms/  
places."

*"I think there should be more inclusive access in education buildings, more wheelchair facilities."*

More Disability  
Facilities eg. Wheel chair  
ramps etc.

*"More disability facilities e.g. wheelchair ramps etc."*

Some children also recommended greater access to autism units.

*"In schools around my town I think there are two autism units, it is not everywhere... it should be in all schools and not just in a specific unit or in specific places. There are also schools that become 'the' school to go to if you have a particular disability, and that means other schools stop trying which is bad."*

The second education question the children were asked to consider was:

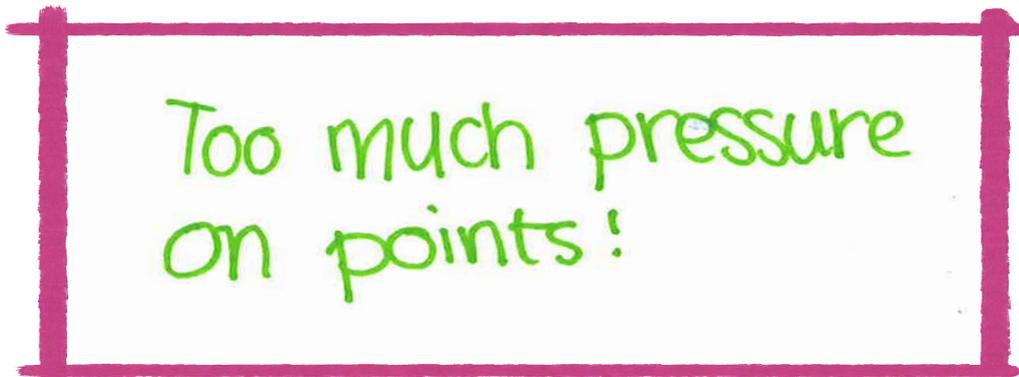
*What changes would you like to see to the Leaving Certificate system?*

The children's recommendations can be categorised into:

- Exam and assessment reform
- Promotion of alternative education routes

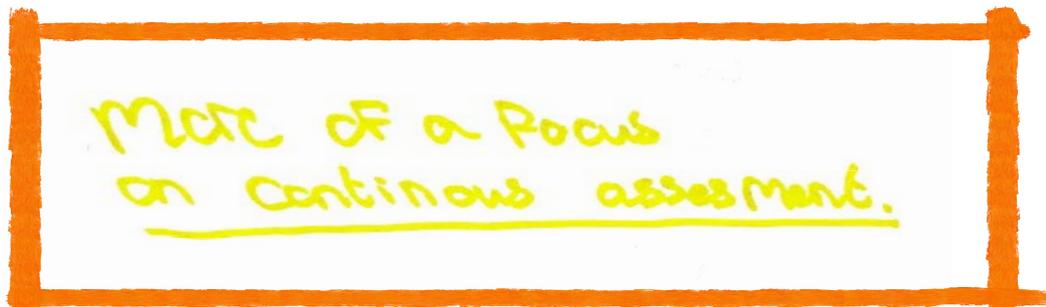
## 2.5 Exam and assessment reform

Overwhelmingly, the children who participated in the education discussions felt that the Leaving Certificate (Leaving Cert) was not fit for purpose. The majority of children agreed that the emphasis on points is stressful and needs to be changed.



*"Too much pressure on points!"*

To alleviate the pressure that children sitting their Leaving Cert feel, the children recommended exam and assessment reform. Some children recommended increasing classroom-based assessment, while others recommended continuous assessment.



*"More of a focus on continuous assessment."*

# Senior Cycle Reform

↳ continuous assessment

“Senior cycle reform – continuous assessment.”

## Leaving Cert and Exam Pressure

→ Currently the leaving cert is spaced together in around three weeks. Rather than having it all in those three weeks the Oireachtas should consider spacing the exams one after another with days to study and implement CBA style examinations that count as grades towards your end grade.

“Leaving Cert and Exam Pressure:

Currently the Leaving Cert is spaced together in around three weeks. Rather than having it all in those three weeks the Oireachtas should consider spacing the exams one after another with days to study and implement CBA [Classroom-based assessment] examinations that count as grades towards your end grade.”

*“One I would like to see is senior cycle reform get over the line. I would like to see that way before 2028. Only when I get out of college will I see those reforms, so I’ll only get to see those after students have been campaigning them for years. So I would like to see reflected in how exams are progressed, and in continuous assessment. The major thing is putting in place continuous assessment and making sure it is accessible to everyone. The Leaving Cert as it is just doesn’t make sense, we are in a different age than what we were 20 years ago.”*

There were also a few recommendations for adopting an A-Level style approach to the Leaving Cert as in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

School should have  
Less main Subjects,  
Adapt to A Levels in  
England and have  
3 or 4 Main Subjects  
to focus on.



*“Schools should have less main subjects, adapt to A Levels in England and have 3 or 4 main subjects to focus on.”*

## 2.6 Promotion of alternative education routes

Many children that we spoke to at the World Café believed that there was not enough promotion of the alternatives to the traditional Leaving Cert, such as the Leaving Cert Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Cert Vocational Programme (LCVP). Some believed that LCA was stigmatised within their schools and wider society. They believed that it was seen as less prestigious than the traditional Leaving Cert and that this impacts access to the course, either because schools do not offer it or because children feel that they will be discriminated against if they choose it.

The children made strong recommendations to increase awareness of LCA and alternative routes and make it more widely available.

remove stigma with LCA

*"Remove stigma with LCA."*

LCA - Society views  
- Unaccessible

*"LCA - society views - unaccessible."*

Provide more information  
about Leaving Cert & other  
options (LCA, LCVP)

*"Provide more information about Leaving Cert and other options (LCA, LCVP)."*

Child 1: “The media doesn’t appreciate these programmes in general, so it sounds lesser to people and it is not as accessible. I would have to drive further out to access it. LCA needs to be reformed to be more accessible, and more attractive to people.”

Child 5: “There is definitely a stigma around LCA, it’s like it’s lower than the other programmes. For instance, it is deemed to be less than other professions. There definitely needs to be more awareness around it.”

Child 3: “Another thing with our school is that they don’t offer LCA. It is regarded as something that it is not traditional, and therefore less important somehow, but that is not true. If someone does not want to do the traditional leaving cert people have to change schools, and their whole school life. That is not correct.”





# SUPPORT S

More **FUNDS**  
are **NEEDED**



While on  
a **WALK**

Open  
to **THER**

**ANIMAL THERAPY**



x Regular

x Game  
eac

INTRODUCE **SPORTS**  
OR **HOBBIES** to **CHILDREN**  
WITH **MENTAL HEALTH**  
**ISSUES**



# SERVICES



Accessibility to  
**MEDICAL CARDS**

ess  
**APY**

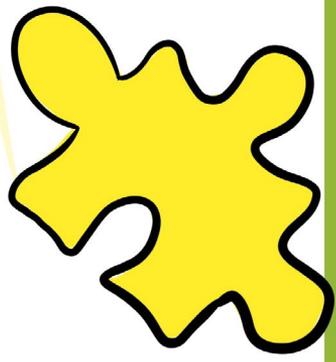


Make improvements  
to the list SYSTEM.  
Quicker access  
to **Doctors** and  
**SURGERY**

It's too Long

Sessions  
time  
h Week

Traveller children  
experience Problems  
getting Medical Cards



**STOP** dismissing children's  
**mental Health Issues**  
because they are "Too Young"



### 3. Services That Support Children

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In discussing services that support children, the first World Café question focussed on mental health. Participants were asked the following question:

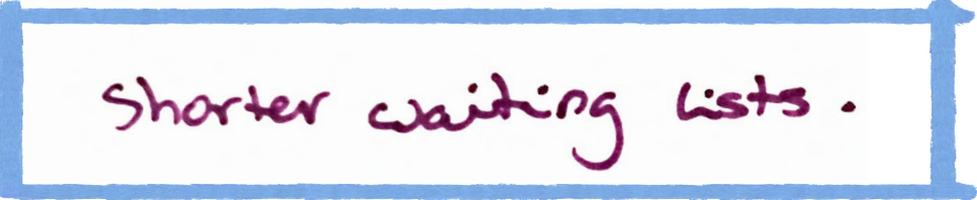
*How would you like to see the Government address the mental health needs of children and provide services?*

The children involved in the discussions found it challenging to make concrete recommendations for improvement in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) but they did identify priority areas to be addressed:

- Reduce waiting lists
- Increase staff numbers and training
- Lower the age threshold in CAMHS
- Bringing mental health supports in to schools

#### 3.1 Reduce waiting lists

Many of the children had first-hand experience of CAMHS and the long waiting lists for services had affected them. This made many of them feel angry and let down.



Shorter waiting lists.

“Shorter waiting lists.”



w a i t i n g  
L i s t . . .

“Waiting list...”

Im on the waiting  
list since Im 12 and Im  
going 17 soon and  
I struggle very  
bad with  
mental health.

"I'm on the waiting list since I'm 12 and I'm 17 soon and I struggle very bad with mental health."

• ★ • Too long waiting list for  
• therapy •

"Too long waiting list for therapy."

the waitlist needs to  
not be so long.

*"The wait list needs to not be so long."*

*"I can't get into a service. Been put on a list [and there is] months and months of a queue."*

These services should have a  
small waiting time as  
some people find it hard waiting

*"These services should have a small waiting time as some people find it hard waiting."*

Stupid Waiting lists!

*"Stupid waiting lists!"*

Children also believed that they were only prioritised when they were in extreme crisis.

*"[The] priority is - are you going to hurt yourself or are you going to hurt others?"*

*"You need to get that bad before you get help."*

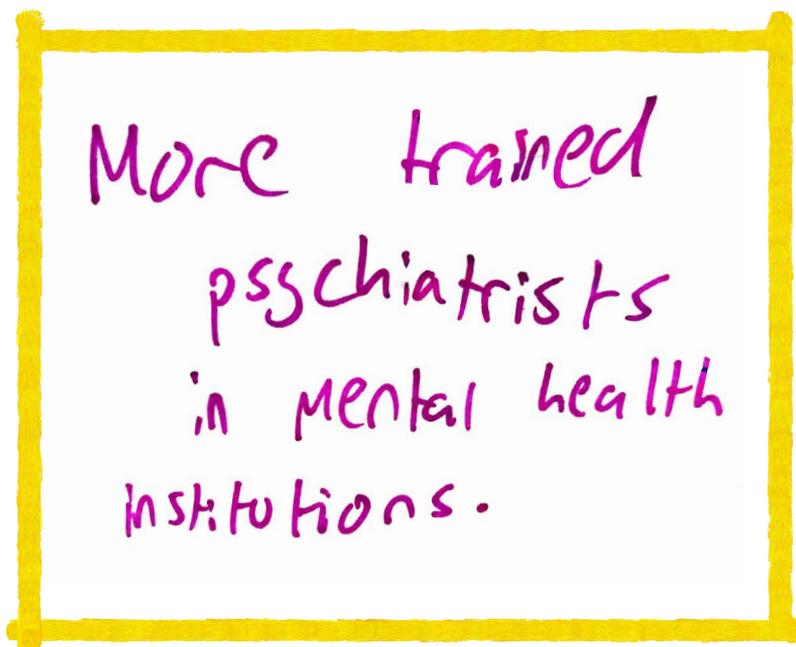
*"Waiting to get into an extreme situation."*

*"[There is] no intermediate care, so you go in out of crisis."*

The strength of feeling about the reduction of waiting lists was very clear. The children were adamant that the Government needs to tackle this urgently.

### **3.2 Increase staff numbers and training**

Some children believed that the way to reduce waiting lists and improve services was through hiring more and better trained staff in CAMHS.



*"More trained psychiatrists in mental health institutions."*

*"We need more funding for CAMHS. We need mental health specialists. Bigger budgets because there is not enough staff."*

more/better qualified therapists/councillors

*"More/better qualified therapists/counsellors."*

*"Better trained professionals are needed."*

A number of children expressed the belief that they experienced sexism, homophobia and transphobia in CAMHS, and called for increased staff training in these areas.

lgbtq+ stigma  
needs to be rooted  
out of CAMHS

*"LGBTQ+ stigma  
needs to be rooted  
out of CAMHS."*

\* Misogny  
Depression  
blamed  
on menstrual  
cycle.

*"Misogyny.*

*Depression blamed on  
menstrual cycle."*

*"I was told 'you are depressed because you are gay'. They need to look past labels, it feels dehumanising, services don't want to touch anything with gender identity or Trans issues."*

Children recommended increased training in these areas for CAMHS staff.

### 3.3 Lower the age threshold in CAMHS

Several children raised the issue that they were unable to access CAMHS services as they were not only too young for the service but also too young to have a mental health issue. They called for acknowledgement of their mental health issues and for the provision of support.

I WAS seen  
as 'too young  
to be depressed'

"I was seen as "too young to be depressed"."

"At 10 I said I thought I might be depressed, I was immediately shut down. I was diagnosed the next year."

AT 10 I SAID  
I THOUGHT I MIGHT BE  
DEPRESSED, I WAS IMMEDIATELY  
SHUT DOWN.  
I WAS DIAGNOSED THE NEXT YEAR.

Kids with  
depression  
get pushed  
aside because  
they are  
"too young  
to be depressed"

"Kids with depression get pushed aside because they are 'too young to be depressed'."

Facilities  
like SOSAD  
should lower  
age range or  
raise awareness  
for services for  
younger people

"Facilities like SOSAD [Save our Sons and Daughters] should lower the age range or raise awareness for services for younger people."

### 3.4 Bringing mental health supports into schools

Many children recommended mental health supports being offered in schools. To do this would require increased training for teachers to identify children in need of help and funding to provide trained therapists in schools.

Bring Mental Health  
training in for teachers  
+ school staff

"Bring mental health training in for teachers and school staff."

*“Mental health training for all school staff.”*

*“Counselling services in schools should link with mental health services. Government should encourage this.”*

*“A designated person in school for mental health support.”*

*“Dedicated counsellor even two days a week... Someone from outside, not school staff.”*

*“Guidance counsellors are teachers sometimes with classes, so not available to people in crisis as they may be in class... Guidance counsellors are teachers firstly and they focus often on career guidance.”*

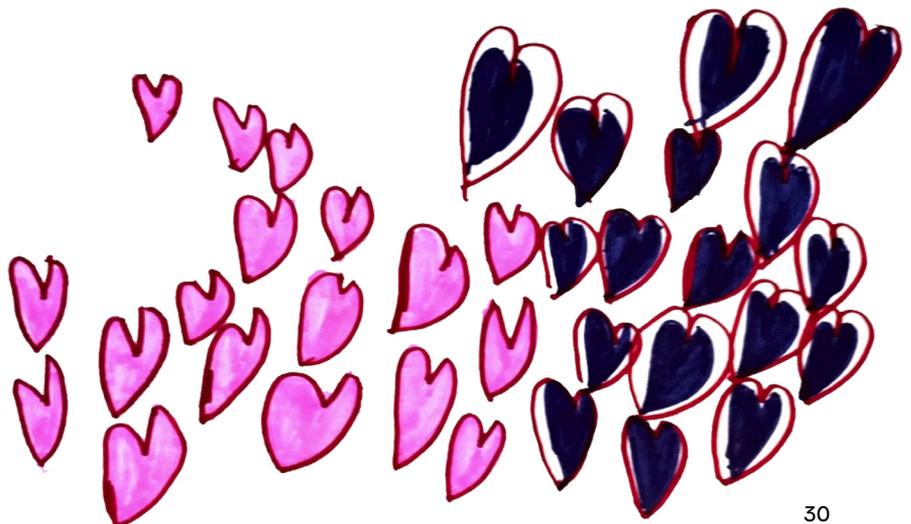
*“The location of the support should be appropriate. Wellbeing in science lab is not appropriate... There should be dedicated wellbeing areas in schools where you can go to.”*

The second question asked at the services that support children tables was:

*What other health and social services does the Government need to prioritise for improvement?*

The majority of children had one clear recommendation.

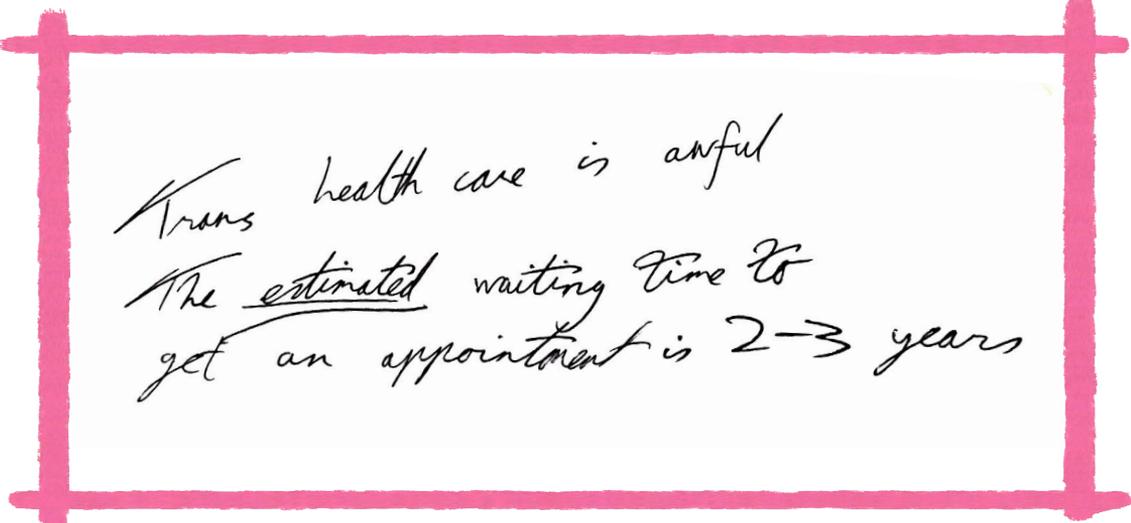
- Improve Transgender healthcare services.



### 3.5 Improve Transgender healthcare services

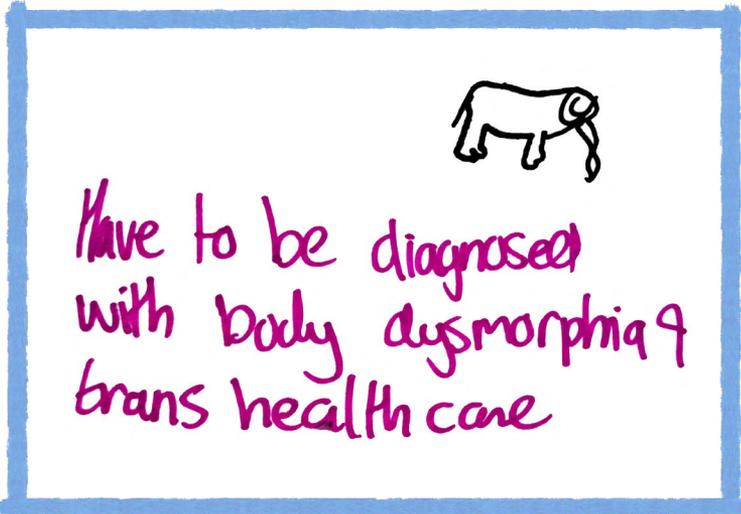
Some children had experiences of using gender services in the healthcare system, while others were concerned about this issue on behalf of other children. The children outlined that the waiting lists for support were too long and that medication could not be prescribed for them due to their age, while others were frustrated by the need for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

*“The GP told me that there was nothing she could do about hormones blockers.”*



Trans health care is awful  
The estimated waiting time to  
get an appointment is 2-3 years

*“Trans health is awful. The estimated waiting time to get an appointment is 2-3 years.”*



Have to be diagnosed  
with body dysmorphia &  
trans healthcare

*“Have to be diagnosed  
with body dysmorphia  
for Trans healthcare.”*

Other children expressed their belief that medical professionals let their views on Trans issues dictate children's treatment and recommended further education in Trans healthcare for medical professionals, as well as a greater number of specialists in the public health system.

\* Regarding transgender health services GP can have their social judgement cloud their medical responsibility

"Regarding Transgender health services GPs can have their social judgment cloud their medical responsibility."

"Education and training for medical professionals regarding Trans issues."

Gender specialists  
need publicly.

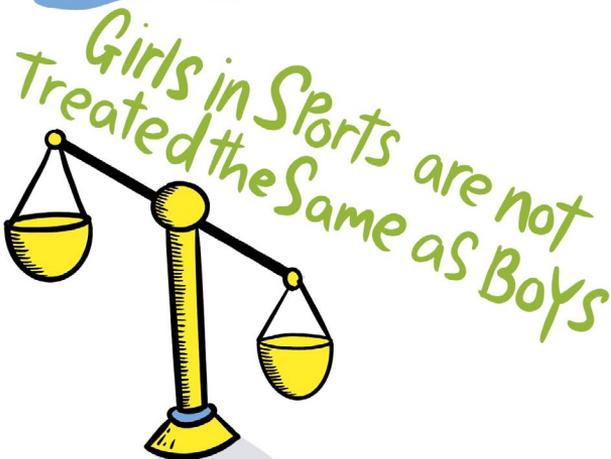
"Gender specialists needed publicly."

# NON DISCRIMINATION

Address Racism at



EDUCATION  
on  
DIFFERENT  
CULTURES



~~END  
DIRECT  
PROVISION~~

# MININATION



a School Not Later in life



In some cases  
We are Moving  
Backwards  
When we should  
be moving  
Forward's →

ON

I have Never  
Seen a teacher who's  
a Person of Colour at School  
before

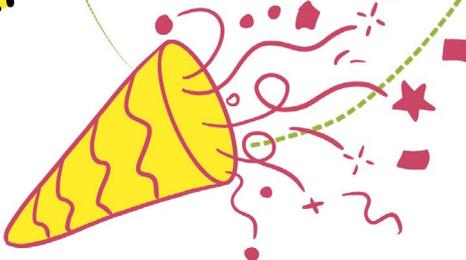


RES

Racism addressed  
as a Seperate issue  
Not Just as  
BULLYING!!!

Diversity in  
Teaching Force

Celebrate ALL  
RELIGIOUS  
HOLIDAYS



N

## 4. Equality and Non-Discrimination

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At the World Café tables on equality and non-discrimination, the children were asked to think about how discrimination could be addressed in schools and in the community and society more widely. The first question they were asked was:

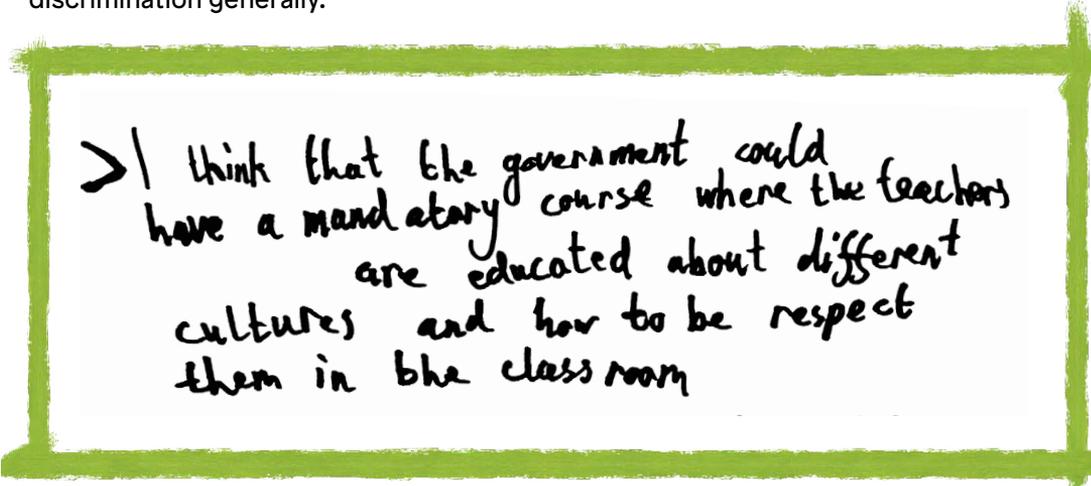
*What actions would you like to see to prevent racism and all forms of discrimination in schools by teachers and pupils?*

The children made the following recommendations in these areas:

- Improved teacher training
- Changes to curriculum, including on:
  - Racism
  - Discrimination on the basis of religion
  - Gender and sexual orientation or identity
  - Disability
- Changes to the wider school environment.

### 4.1 Improved teacher training

A number of children wanted better training for teachers on racism and discrimination generally.



> I think that the government could have a mandatory course where the teachers are educated about different cultures and how to be respect them in the classroom

*"I think that the government could have a mandatory course where the teachers are educated about different cultures and how to be respect them in the classroom."*

Bring Culture into Curriculum to normalise cultures and experiences. Rather than Culture Day

"Bring culture into curriculum to normalise cultures and experiences. Rather than culture day."

"Teach students about the effects of racism."

To have classes for teachers to understand racism and how to not be racist

"To have classes for teachers to understand racism and how to not be racist."

"The Government should have mandatory courses where teachers are taught about different cultures and how to respect them."

More education  
with teachers about  
Discrimination in  
School

"More education with teachers about discrimination in school."

Improving their system  
- Teachers should  
be educated more to  
where they understand the child  
and stop discrimination.  
by understanding other culture  
and religion. this will  
make others understand  
because they are children  
they are the future. <sup>students</sup>

"Teachers should be educated more so they understand the child and stop discrimination by understanding other culture and religion."

"Educate teachers on history from this generation and old generation. The facts."

Educate teachers on  
the history from this  
and old generation.  
the facts

"Education and knowledge is power. People underestimate how incredibly powerful of a tool education can be. This needs to be incorporated into their training. This should be enforced in college during their training."

"Improving teachers' education because they don't understand that other religions are important as well e.g. Islam.

Plus forcing a religion onto someone - ask about their opinion."

Improving Teachers education  
because they don't understand that  
other religion is important  
as well. e.g. Islam.

Plus forcing a religion onto  
someone ask about their  
opinion.

"Teachers teach much more than just the curriculum. Children are like sponges, they absorb everything. Teachers have such an influence on kids and sometimes children are around their teachers more than their parents."

## 4.2 Curriculum change

The children had many suggestions about improving inclusion and diversity in school and how inequality and discrimination can be tackled. For a number of children this meant bringing diversity into the curriculum rather than once-off events in schools.

More diverse  
Curriculum

"More diverse curriculum."

More education surrounding  
multiculturalism in schools

*"More education surrounding multiculturalism in schools."*

Education on  
MICRO-AGGRESSIONS

*"Education on micro-aggressions."*

Diverse Staff  
And representation for  
Students & teachers in the  
Curriculum (CSPE, History etc.)

*"Diverse staff and  
representation for  
students and teachers  
in the curriculum  
(CSPE, History etc.)."*

“Rewrite older books so it does not have racist or homophobic terms in them. I do not see how random slurs build up a story arc. They have no meaning to the story. It is one thing to show segregation that happened at the time but it is another to use slurs used at the time.”

“Involve other races in history. For example, there is like this thing with the Vietnamese boat people who came to Ireland. This is not mentioned at all in the Irish curriculum. Back in the 1800s, the Irish people were brought to the Caribbean by the English. This is not in the curriculum. This should be included.”

Equality & discrimination  
education should be  
cross-curricular.

“Equality and discrimination education should be cross-curricular.”

“Teach them young.

Education on racism is VITAL.

Re-education of people with implicit biases.

Teach about bad things that were done.

Learn from mistakes, don't push things under the rug and pretend it didn't happen.”

TEACH THEM YOUNG  
/  
Education on racism is VITAL.  
Re-education of people with implicit biases  
Teach about bad things that were done  
Learn from mistakes,  
don't push things under the rug  
and pretend it didn't happen.

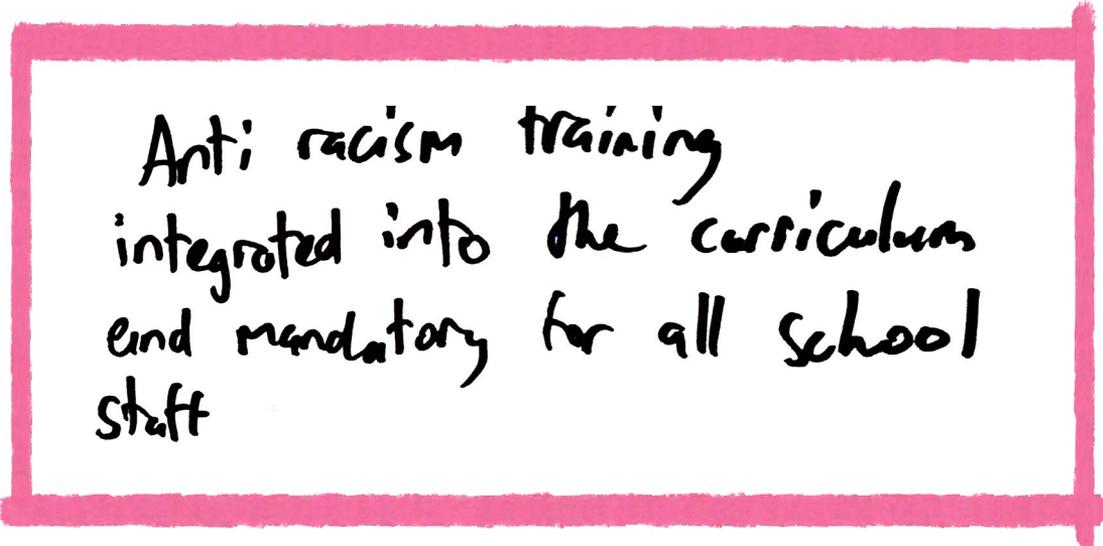
“Communicate clearly about the issue.”

*“We do focus on very common knowledge subjects in history. I have never seen anyone pushing the boundaries forward. Irish history can be so much broader than that. Our history is so much broader than the famine and 1916.”*

*“In Germany, they teach about the Holocaust so they can learn from it and not push it under the rug. They acknowledge that discrimination happened and they teach about it. In other places, they don’t teach about it, they ignore it.”*

## **Racism**

Many children talked specifically about racism in school, the need for better education about this and recommended ways to tackle it.

A rectangular box with a thick, hand-drawn pink border. Inside the box, the text is written in a black, cursive, handwritten style. The text reads: "Anti racism training integrated into the curriculum and mandatory for all school staff".

Anti racism training  
integrated into the curriculum  
and mandatory for all school  
staff

*“Anti-racism training integrated into the curriculum and mandatory for all school staff.”*

*“There is no reason why learning about heavy topics can’t be fun, but it does not have to be so heavy either. They can change how they teach it as well. In America, they did an eye colour experiment with young children. She segregated them based on eye colour and said one was better than the other. She observed they did change their behaviour and so are easily influenced by the experiment. If we can be influenced negatively that much, there is no reason we can’t be influenced positively in the same way.”*

Q1  
↳ teach students about the effects of systemic racism, and how the cycle can be broken

"Teach students about the effects of systemic racism, and how the cycle can be broken."

"Racism needs to be addressed separately than bullying."



"Not treating discrimination and racism as bullying in schools but as more serious and that should be taken care of equally if not more so."

Not treating Discrimination and Racism as bullying in Schools but as more serious and that should be taken care of equally if not more so

"Sanctions against students."

Discriminative acts should not be approached with an anti Bullying policy  
teaching the effects of Discrimination/racism from a young age.

"Discriminative acts should not be approached with an anti-bullying policy. Teaching the effects of discrimination/racism from a young age."

“In school, if somebody does say something racist, they put it under bullying and it undermines the situation. It is not the same as bullying they shouldn't put it under the same category.”

“Anti-racism and unconscious bias training within the Irish curriculum and with teachers and guidance counsellors.”

Anti-racism & unconscious bias training within the Irish curriculum and with teachers and guidance counsellors

“Education is key. As soon as first class hits, they should get the education. Playschool, juniors and seniors do not care. But first class, they start noticing. If we start them young, they will notice the difference more. It is because of implicit bias. As you grow, you hear more people talking about race. In playschool, I didn't notice people were black. But then you hear bad influences from other people.”

Primary schools need to educate younger children on the topic of racism and why it is wrong. I think many people who maybe ~~are~~ racist today have learned its ok from a young age either in school or from parents and this has been passed down from each generation. This problem needs to be sorted from the very start and young children need to learn about different cultures.

“Primary schools need to educate younger children on the topic of racism and why it is wrong. I think many people who may be racist today have learned its ok from a young age either in school or from parents and this has been passed down from each generation. This problem needs to be sorted from the very start and young children need to learn about different cultures.”

*“There should be at least one trained member of staff in schools to deal with discrimination cases so that in cases of discrimination, they feel there is somebody there they can talk to. Teachers do have their own bias. For people feeling already lonely and discriminated against, it is hard for them to know where to go to. So to have a dedicated person to talk to would help.”*

Anti racism  
policy carried out by  
teachers monitored  
by PA

*“Anti-racism policy  
carried out by teachers  
monitored by a PA  
[parents association].”*

Consequences  
for students  
and staff who  
engage in racist  
behaviour actually  
put in place and  
enforced

*“Consequences for  
students and staff  
who engage in racist  
behaviour actually put  
in place and enforced.”*

## Discrimination on the basis of religion

The teaching of religion at all, as well as the lack of diversity in religious education, are two issues that many children want to see changed and recommended the following actions.

Q1. Non-biased classes on religion that focus on multicultural religious identities. This will i) promote equality, acceptance + a safer environment and ii) break down barriers between student. → show that ~~minor religious groups~~ different religious groups can learn about each other in a safe space

“Non-biased classes on religion that focus on multicultural religious identities. This will:

i) promote equality, acceptance + a safer environment and;

ii) break down barriers between student → show that different religious groups can learn about each other in a safe space.”

Board of Education needs to incorporate a more diverse religious education if it won't be removed.

“Board of education needs to incorporate a more diverse religious education if it won't be removed.”

• Making the Subject of Religion a non-exam subject and making a subject where we don't have to focus on a curriculum and we are able to ask questions they have on religion as I believe in Teachers only make students learn one religion as they only need one question to answer questions in the Religion exam in Junior cert.

"Making the subject of religion a non-exam subject and making a subject where we don't have to focus on a curriculum and we are able to ask questions they have on religion as I believe in teachers only make students learn one religion as they only need one question to answer questions in the religion exam in Junior cert."

Teach students about other cultural holidays like Eid, Passover.

"Teach students about other cultural holidays like Eid, Passover."

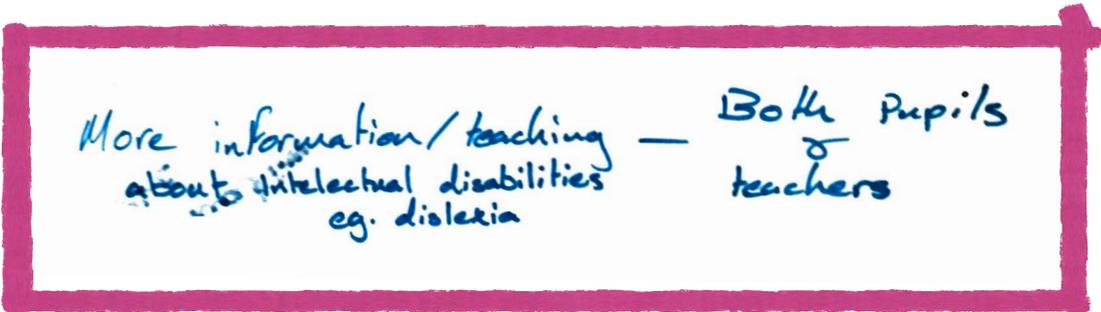
"Schools trying old 'formula' with religious education. It's not working, make for a more diverse class."

\* Schools trying old 'formula' with Religious Education. It's not working make for a more diverse class.

"Improving teachers' education. In our school, we never get to learn about other religions. We only get to learn about Jesus and Christianity. I would appreciate if other people knew about my religion. We get asked a lot of questions, like why are you wearing a hijab. The teachers could explain this to the students so that students know. Teachers don't know it themselves so prevent education about it then."

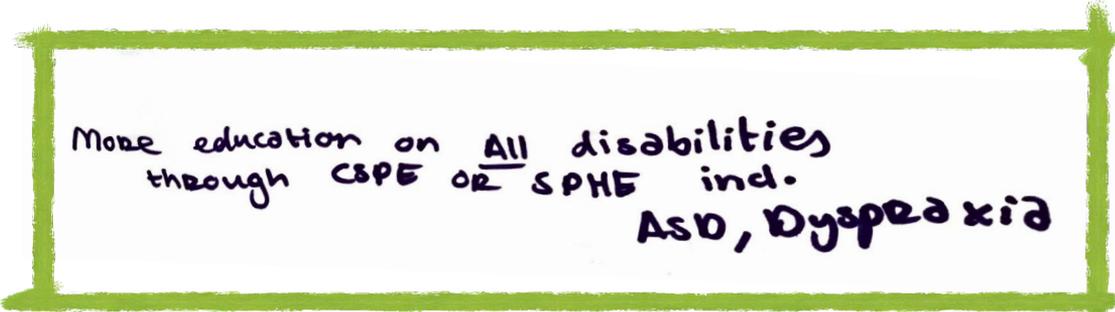
## Disability

Children felt that teachers and pupils did not get enough education on disabilities to meet the needs of all students and that children with disabilities experience discrimination. They recommended a number of ways this could be addressed, including more education for teachers and students on disabilities.



More information/teaching about intellectual disabilities eg. dyslexia — Both Pupils & teachers

"More information/teaching about intellectual disabilities e.g. dyslexia. Both pupils & teachers."



More education on All disabilities through CSPE OR SPHE incl. ASD, Dyspraxia

"More education on all disabilities through CSPE or SPHE incl. ASD, Dyspraxia."

Mandatory training  
for teachers, therapists  
And healthcare providers  
on disability. This  
includes hidden disabilities  
like POTS + EDS.

"Mandatory training  
for teachers, therapists  
and healthcare providers  
on disability. This includes  
hidden disabilities  
like POTS [Postural  
Orthostatic Tachycardia  
Syndrome] + EDS [Ehlers-  
Danlos Syndrome]."

"Make all schools incl. older  
buildings as wheelchair  
friendly/accessible as possible."

make all schools  
incl. older buildings  
as wheelchair  
friendly/accessible  
as possible

## Gender and gender diversity

Children identified a number of issues and solutions to address gender stereotyping and LGBTIQ+ discrimination in schools.

Inequality in subject choice  
in single sex school  
either abolish single sex  
schools or abolish single  
sex schools

"Inequality in subject  
choice in single sex  
school. Either abolish  
single sex schools  
or abolish single  
sex schools."

> also have a course about Lgbtq+ community

*"Also have a course about LGBTQ+ community."*

I think teachers  
should not get away  
with deadnaming  
or misgendering  
Trans or Non-binary  
students.

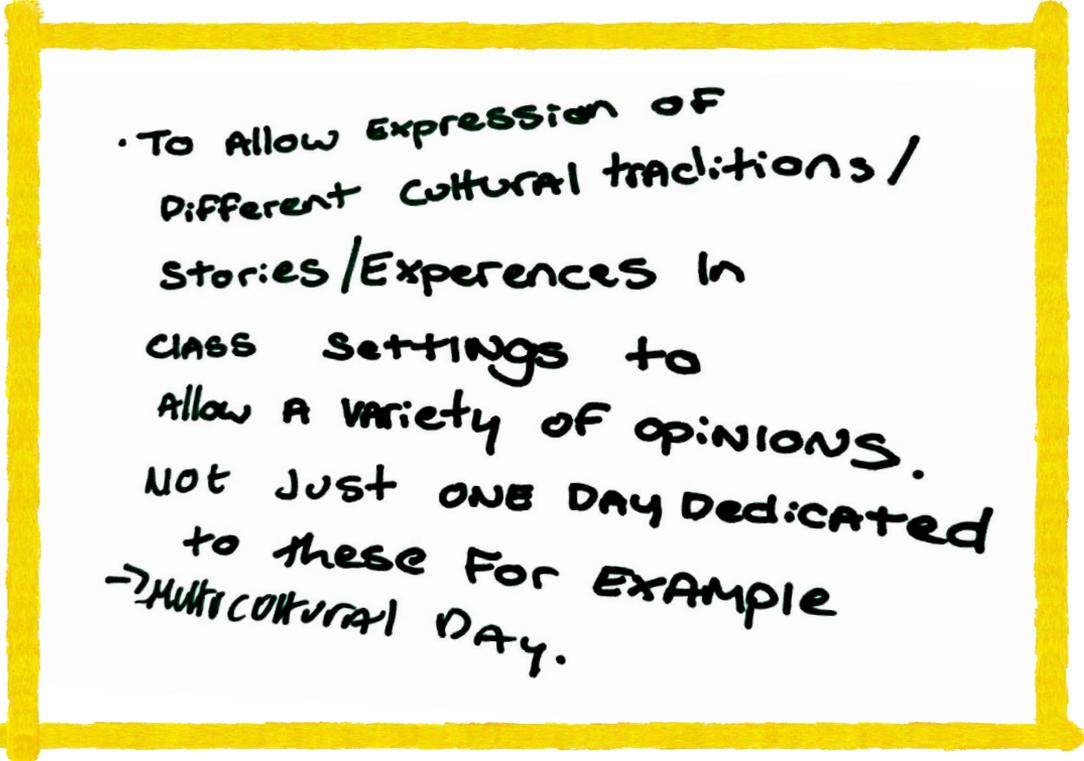
*"I think teachers should not get away with deadnaming or misgendering trans or non-binary students."*

Gender Neutral bathrooms  
in all schools

*"Gender neutral bathrooms in all schools."*

### 4.3 Changes to the wider school environment

In addition to training for teachers and changes in what they learn, children also want to see actions taken across a number of areas to improve equality and non-discrimination in the wider school environment. These changes cross-over a number of the themes above, but also include greater representation of different races, cultures, religions, gender identities and abilities in schools, as well as implementation of school policies.



• To Allow expression of  
different cultural traditions/  
stories/Experiences in  
class settings to  
allow a variety of opinions.  
Not just one day dedicated  
to these for example  
→ Multicultural Day.

*“To allow expression of different cultural traditions/stories/experiences in class settings to allow a variety of opinions. Not just one day dedicated to these, for example, multicultural day.”*

*“A lot of people think racism is verbal. It is mandatory to wear black leather shoes but if you are Hindu, you can't wear things that are made from leather and you can get in trouble. You should not get in trouble for things like this. The same thing like asking for time off for a religious holiday that is not Christmas or Easter. If you get time off for those holidays, you should get time off for others too.”*

Solution

How to prevent

Student Forums

→ The establishment of a regional student forum to discuss problems school students have in their school. And how they can address them as one. A student forum would be in every electoral district.

"Solution.

How to prevent.

Student Forums.

The establishment of a regional student forum to discuss problems students have in their school. And how they can address them as one. A student forum would be in every electoral district."

more multicultural  
School events that  
showcase and celebrate  
different cultures in  
the school community.

"More multicultural school events that showcase and celebrate different cultures in the school community."

Assemblies in  
School discussing (particularly Irish  
speaking)  
racism  
And Primary Schools

"Assemblies in the school discussing racism (particularly Irish speaking schools).  
And primary."

Culture days in school

"Culture days in school."

"Diversity in the teaching force. 96% of the teaching profession are White Irish.  
That is because Irish is mandatory. A lot of the time English is not your first  
language. As Irish is taught through English, you won't be able to learn English  
either. Then you will not be able to become a teacher."

Diversity in the teaching force  
Irish is mandatory to become a  
teacher putting students of colour  
at a disadvantage

"Diversity in the teaching force. Irish is mandatory to become a teacher putting  
students of colour at a disadvantage."

Include more  
black teachers.

*"Include more black teachers."*

*"To put more emphasis  
and normalise all  
different kind of  
students involved in  
every activity offered."*

to Put more emphasis and  
normalise all different  
kind of students  
involved in every  
activity offered

National Holidays representations  
of all students

*"National holidays representations of all students."*

*"A lot of schools are like, 'we have zero tolerance for racism', but they ignore microaggressions. A lot of people like to ignore microaggressions as people do not wish to deal with them. We need to call them out for what they are."*

The second question that the children were asked was:

*What would help fight racism and discrimination in society more broadly? Who should make this happen?*

The children made a number of recommendations to government about:

- o Awareness and celebration of other cultures and religions
- o Increased opportunities for integration

#### **4.4 Awareness and celebration of other cultures and religions**

Children clearly recognise that Irish society is changing and becoming more diverse and made a number of recommendations about how this can be acknowledged and celebrated.



*“Awareness about multicultural identity- Ireland is not a homogenous country anymore!”*

"I think cultures should be more celebrated by the government in general. Celebration of independence for countries should be celebrated. We should also have days of mourning for people lost in wars, battles etc. So as to show that we've all had relatives or have all been through hardships and should all have the same rights."

Qd.  
I think cultures should be more celebrated by the government in general. Independence celebration of countries should be celebrated. We should also have days of mourning for people lost in wars, battles etc. so as to show that we've all had relatives or have all been through hardships and should all have the same rights.

I think the gmt should teach about our culture.

"I think the [government] should teach about our culture."

Other solutions involved a wider recognition of different cultures through holidays and events.

★ have national holidays  
of different cultures  
(hanukkah, ramadan etc)  
celebrated, promoted +  
protected nationwide

"Have national holidays of different cultures (Hanukkah, Ramadan etc.) celebrated, promoted + protected nationwide."

celebrating  
uniqueness → Hijabs,  
religious/cultural indicators,  
etc.

"Celebrating uniqueness → Hijabs, religious/cultural indicators etc."

## 4.5 Increased opportunities for integration

To promote opportunities for integration of migrant communities, children wanted to see an end to Direct Provision and better opportunities for integration as part of the solution to racism and discrimination.

*“Ending Direct Provision would be a massive step. The conditions are absolutely atrocious, they are constantly surveyed, they can’t get a job, they can’t drive. The process goes on so long for so many people.”*

### Integration Projects

<sup>Example</sup>  
→ Ukrainian Refugees were given the opportunity by Kerry ETB to break any stigma towards Ukrainians by having events where both Irish and Ukrainians were able to talk, and become friends in turn preventing discrimination and breaking stigmas

*“Integration projects → Ukrainian refugees were given the opportunity by Kerry ETB to break any stigma towards Ukrainians by having events where both Irish and Ukrainians were able to talk and become friends preventing discrimination and breaking stigmas.”*

*“Opportunities within the communities to mix with other cultures.”*



# COMMUNITY

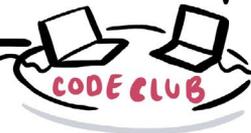
express yourself!

ART FOR EVERYONE!



SURVEY STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS

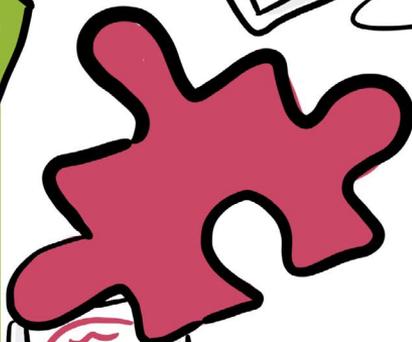
FREE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMES



CREATIVE PARTNER of YOUNG



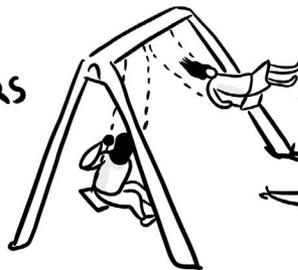
CRE



OUR PUBLIC SPACES



I WANT A SAFE SPACE FOR TEENAGERS



PLAYGROUNDS ALL AGES

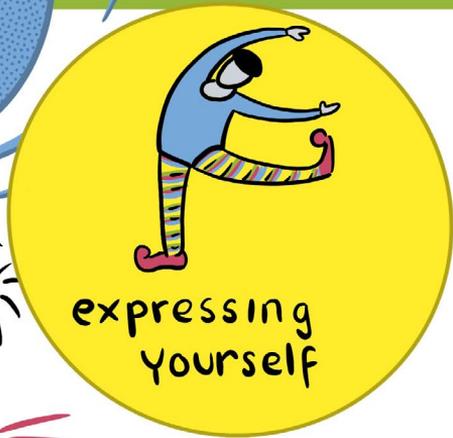
for (NOT JUST > 14)

# LEISURE

VE  
RSHIPS  
PEOPLE

TODAY:  
CULTURE  
DAY:  
POLAND

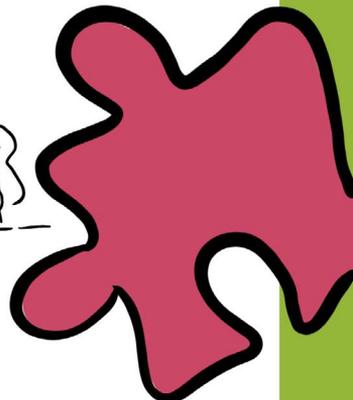
celebrate  
ALL  
OUR CULTURES!



## CULTURE

## ACTIVITY

ART  
MORE CULTURAL  
SPACES (free and  
accessible)

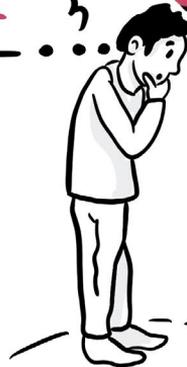


EMPLOY  
PARK RANGERS  
to PREVENT  
ANTI-SOCIAL  
BEHAVIOUR

ACCESSIBLE  
for ALL



## COMMUNITY EVENTS



WHERE  
CHILDREN  
can  
HAVE THEIR  
SAY

## 5. Community, Play and Leisure

---

The children were asked two questions about their community and leisure at the World Café. The first question was:

*What can the Government do to make sure that all children have access to safe leisure, play, cultural and arts activities?*

The children identified several recommendations to ensure that all children had equal and safe access to leisure, play and cultural activities in their communities. These were:

- Increased funding
- Improved public transport
- More facilities for children
- Investment in rural areas
- Promotion of youth services and activities
- Improved safety measures
- Better training for Gardai

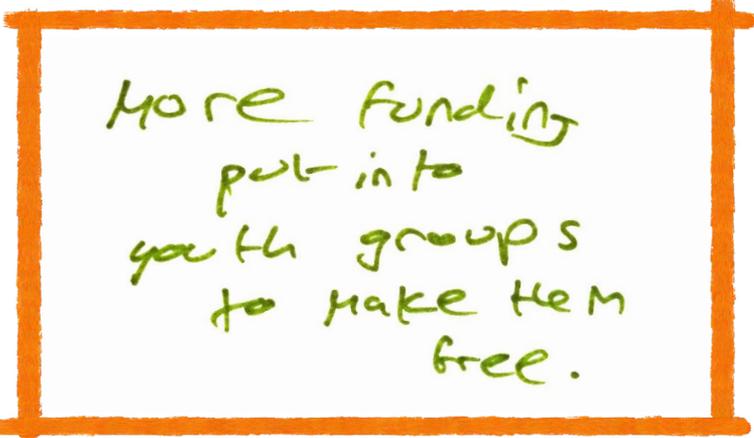
### 5.1 Increased funding

Children were frustrated that their local sports, youth and arts groups cost a lot of money. Many children recommended investment to ensure that they could attend groups free of charge.



*"Make sports cheaper for people that want it but don't have the money."*

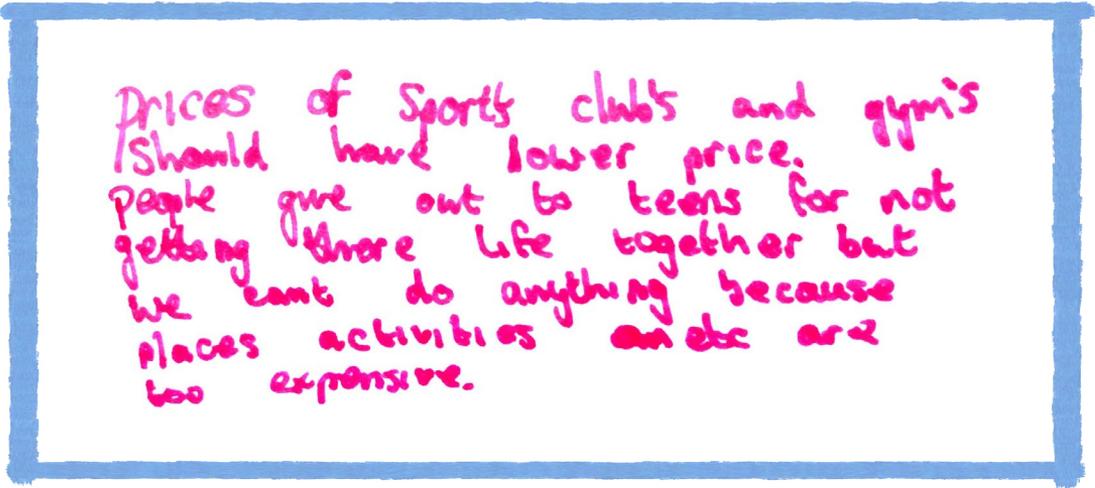
“GAA clubs are very expensive. There needs to be funding for clubs with equipment.”



More funding  
put into  
youth groups  
to make them  
free.

“More funding put into youth groups to make them free.”

“If all activities were free there would be less judgement of those who can’t afford to attend facilities which are paid for – when the government advertise something as free, other kids make comments like, oh they must only be there because they don’t have money.”



Prices of sports clubs and gyms  
should have lower price.  
People give out to teens for not  
getting their life together but  
we can't do anything because  
places activities etc are  
too expensive.

“Prices of sports clubs and gyms. Should have lower price. People give out to teens for not getting their life together but we can’t do anything because places, activities etc. are too expensive.”

“Money not just into sports clubs/GAA clubs but into artistic pursuits as well.”

Youth proposals  
for cheaper / free  
community activities  
eg. Dance classes ect.

"Youth proposals  
for cheaper/free  
community activities."

Art SUPPLYS  
should be  
free

"Art supplies  
should be free."

Some children believed that providing services through schools could be a solution to giving children greater access to recreation activities.

*"Arts is all private industry and everything is expensive. Stage schools etc. you cannot partake in art if your parents do not have the money to send you. These should be available to all schools – drama classes etc. which are not readily available. Teachers aren't being paid to do these extra-curricular activities so they don't want to do them meaning it's not available to students."*

After school  
Program

*"After school programme."*

*"All afterschool clubs should be made free for all children of all ages – no support there for children whose parents are financially struggling, onus put on older siblings to take care of younger ones."*

teachers paid more for extracurricular  
activities

*"Teachers paid more for extracurricular activities."*

## 5.2 Improved public transport

Inconsistent, expensive and a general lack of public transport was identified as a reason that children could not participate in leisure and cultural activities. The vast majority of the children involved in the World Café discussions recommended that the Government invest money into the public transport infrastructure.

buses come  
on time

*"Buses [should] come on time."*

cheaper public transport!

*"Cheaper public transport!"*

Cheaper Bus travel

*"Cheaper bus travel."*

more transportation  
especially rural areas

*"More transportation especially [in] rural areas."*

If we cannot put  
in playgrounds locally  
in communities should  
provide safe and affordable  
transportation

*"If we cannot put  
playgrounds locally  
in communities  
[we] should provide  
safe and affordable  
transportation."*

*"See where people  
are commuting from  
to get to activities,  
so we can set up  
activities there."*

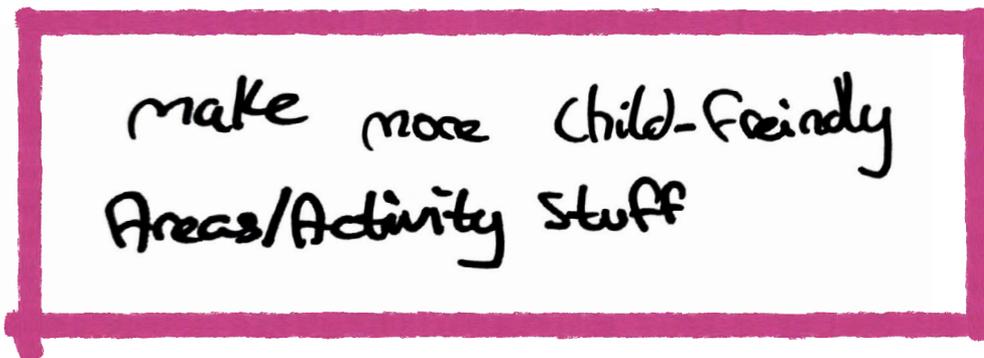
See where  
people are commuting  
from to get to  
activities so we  
can set up  
activities there.

### 5.3 More facilities for children

Many children believed that their local area was not designed for them. A lack of facilities that would allow them to feel safe and included in their communities often frustrated them. They recommend the creation of spaces for them to spend time together and a greater focus on areas for older children in their communities.



“Safe and cleaner places for young people to just hang out with their friends – community centres.”



“Make more child-friendly areas/activity stuff.”

“More facilities for children in the teenage years, everything is focused for younger age groups.”

More access in  
community centres  
in your area

“More access in community centres in your area.”

“More places for those to start their own groups.”

More places  
for those to start  
their own groups.

More alternatives  
for activities for  
those who aren't  
typically sports.

(e.g. art, chess, etc.)

“More alternatives for activities for those who aren't typically sporty (e.g. art, chess etc.)”

"More clubs for people with specific interests as opposed to a youth club where they just do sports, there's loads for these. In [my area] you're only popular if you're doing sports but not everyone enjoys sports... have youth groups dedicated to music, art, board games, digital activities, free dance clubs for all varieties and styles of dance, teaching of musical instruments etc."

Hang out spaces in  
the town Centre.

"Hang out space in  
the town centre."

"Youth centres for  
13-18 year olds, water,  
seating provided  
places to hang  
around (free wifi)."

Youth centers for 13-18 year olds  
Water, seating provided  
Places to hang around  
(free wifi)

"Make more indoor places for leisure, especially for the winter more cafés."

"Make more free spaces so that it's accessible to all, especially cafés with  
wifi etc."

"More places to sit and chill with your friends."

more local Entertainment

"More local entertainment."

Youth hours in  
Swimming pools.

"Youth hours in  
swimming pools."

Playgrounds  
In estates  
\*Safety!!

"Playgrounds in estates. \*Safety!!"

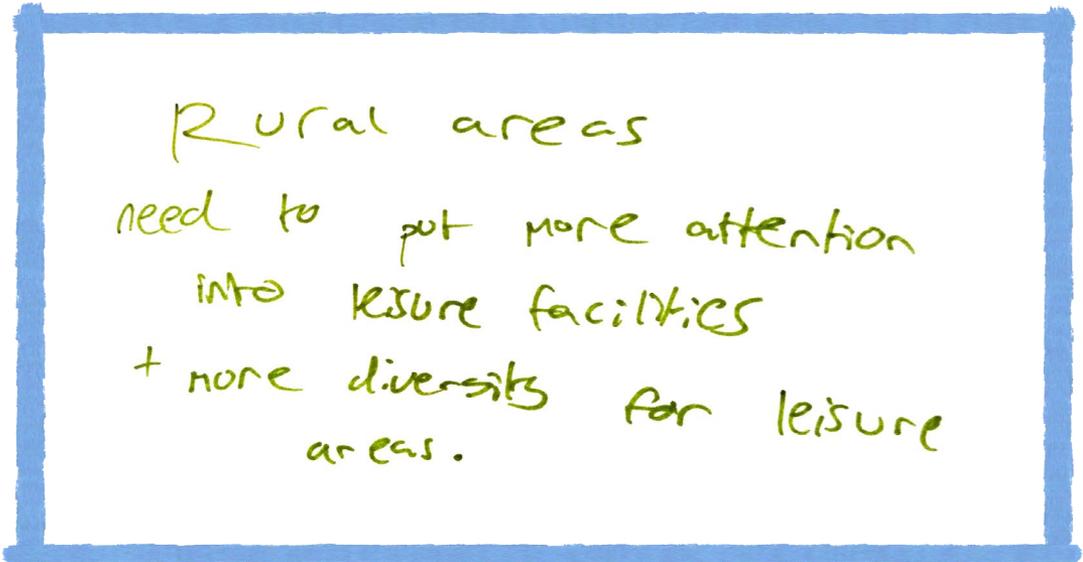
"Childproof playgrounds for safety and some kids over 14 are not allowed in playgrounds, give them access to something if they can't access all playgrounds – playgrounds by age group so that all ages can be included and be safe."

Play Grounds by aged  
Groups. So everyone  
is included.

"Playgrounds  
by age groups.  
So everyone is  
included."

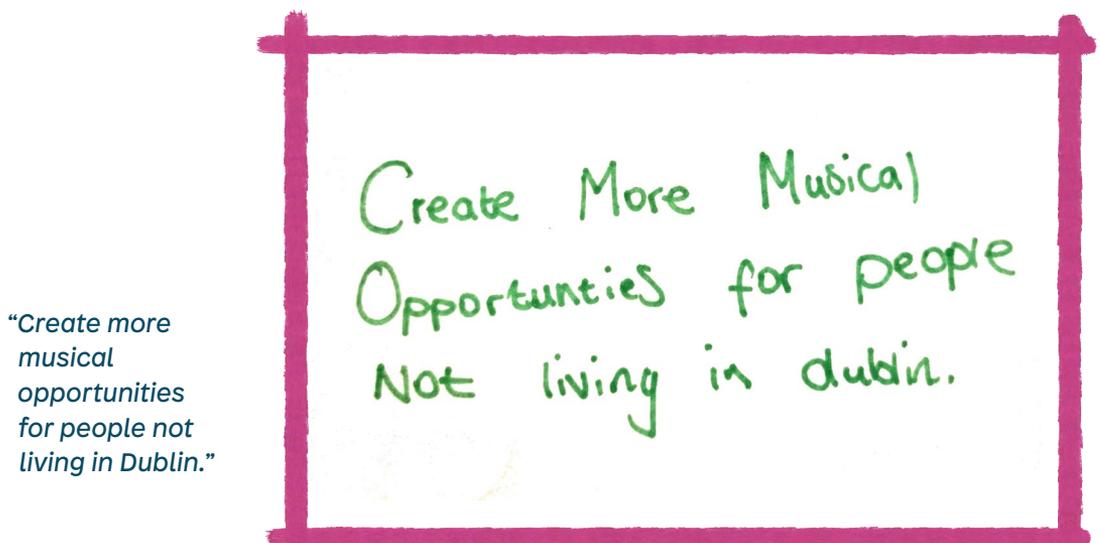
## 5.4 Investment in rural areas

Some children at the World Café were from rural areas and they believed that there are few cultural and leisure activities for them to get involved in. They recommended increased investment in facilities and activities in rural areas.



*"Rural areas need to put more attention into leisure facilities."*

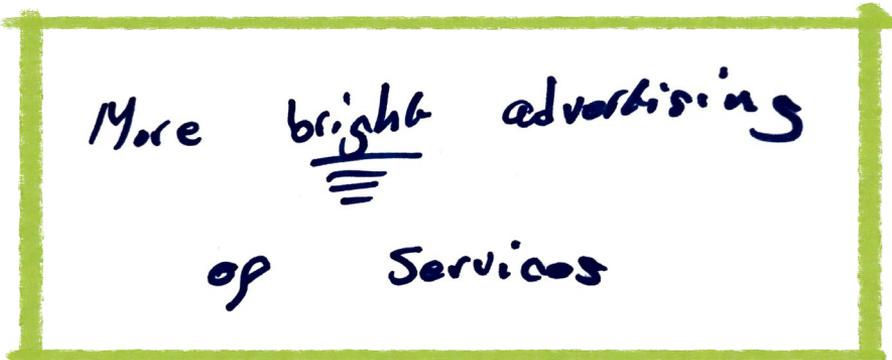
*"More money into rural areas."*



*"Create more musical opportunities for people not living in Dublin."*

## 5.5 Promotion of youth services and activities

Many children acknowledged that there are youth services and activities in their areas, but felt that these were not advertised and promoted well. They called for increased promotion of the services and wanted these services to appeal to older children so they would be more likely to attend.



*"More bright advertising of services."*

*"Advertise these spaces more so children know where to go, advertise on social media but make it more like an actual Instagram account as opposed to an advertisement as children are more likely to swipe past what they perceive to be an advert."*



*"Stickers to advertise youth centres on light poles."*

*"Stop making really childish leaflets (kids in capes, rainbows etc.) this does not appeal to teenagers and older children."*

## 5.6 Improved safety measures

Increased safety in their communities was a recurring theme and children frequently recommended things like increased lighting to give them a sense of security in their area. Some children recommended increased security and Garda presence but they wanted to emphasise that this should be balanced, because too many Gardaí could make them feel intimidated.



*“Make locations with more lighting to feel safer in their community.”*

*“There needs to be safer areas for kids.”*



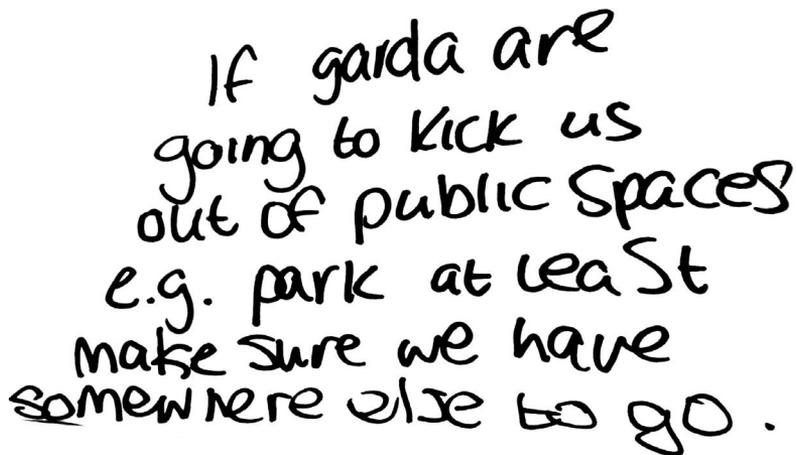
*“More security in non-safe areas.”*

*“Higher Garda presence but not an intimidating presence.”*

*“Balance on Garda presence so they are not scary.”*

## 5.7 Better training for Gardaí

Children were generally frustrated by how they were treated by the Gardaí. Many believed that they were stereotyped. They were treated unfairly if they were spending time with a group of other teenagers, or they were wearing certain types of clothes. The children recommended that there was better training for Gardaí on how to communicate with teenagers in particular.



IF garda are  
going to kick us  
out of public spaces  
e.g. park at least  
make sure we have  
somewhere else to go.

*“If Garda are going to kick us out of public spaces e.g. park at least make sure we have somewhere else to go.”*

*“Educate and provide better training of Gardaí to make them more understanding of teenagers. Do not kick teenagers out of the park for no good reason. Also training in cultural awareness for guards, help them understand marginalised communities such as Traveller Community better.”*



Gardaí be trained  
better

*“Gardaí be trained better.”*

better training  
for guards

*"Better training  
for Guards."*

Garda should hear the whole  
story and treat people the same.

*"Garda should hear the whole story and treat people the same. "*

*"Guards need to stop making assumptions about teenagers in hoodies or just because you have your hands in your pockets!"*

The second World Café question on community was:

*How can we make sure that children have a say in the location and design of safe community spaces and facilities?*

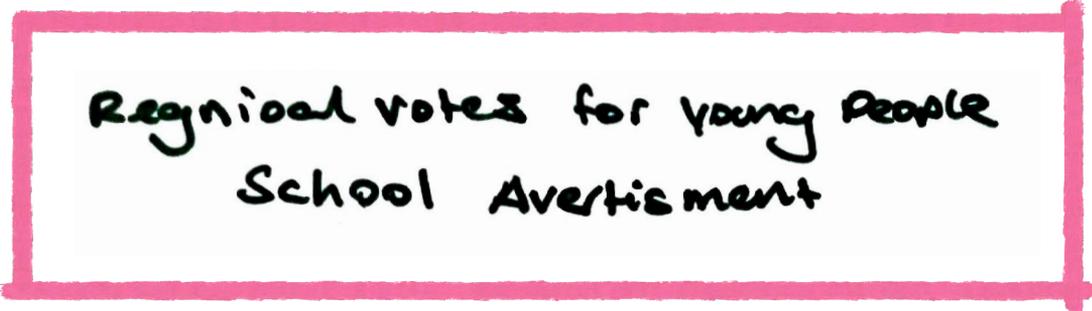
The children made the following recommendations:

- Increased consultation
- Increase the ways in which children's views can be heard



## 5.8 Increased consultation

Many children acknowledged that consultations were taking place but that it was still difficult to have an influence in their local area. Children recommended that youth groups and existing Comhairle groups should be able to make their recommendations directly to county councils and the Dáil.



Regional votes for young people  
School Advertisement

*“Regional votes for young people.”*

*“Government should be required to consult with youth organisations to get opinions and input from children.”*

*“Actually listen to what the children want, there was no skate park in Carlow and they are getting one, but they asked and listened to what the people wanted instead of just building one.”*

*“Let children have their say - ASK them what they want.”*

*“Youth proposals to county councils and to the Dáil so that all children can have their say.”*

## 5.9 Increase the ways in which children’s views can be heard

The children made a number of recommendations about where and how consultations should happen in order to ensure participation. They recommended that government and local authorities link directly with schools, hold community forums or events where children can have their say and put up suggestion boxes in places where children are socialising so they actively contribute to shaping their communities.

Government can   Connect with Schools &  
Send Surveys asking  
what kids want in their  
area. 

*"Government can connect with schools and send surveys asking what kids want in their area."*

send serves to schools.



*"Send surveys to schools."*

*“More school and community visits by members of government so that they can witness the issues first hand themselves instead of just listening to opinions.”*

*“Have government reach out to local schools where facilities are being built so that they can do a survey for the children so everyone can have a say.”*

Community  
event  
Everyone is invited  
to share  
opinions and talk



*“Community event, everyone is invited to share opinions and talk.”*

*“An event for children all over the country where children can express their opinions and engage with each other to share opinions, where feedback is taken.”*

*“Community events so that children can voice their opinions on the access and safety of leisure facilities in their local area.”*

*“Suggestion boxes outside playgrounds and community spaces so that children can voice their opinions.”*

Suggestions box outside  
the Playground.



*"Suggestion box outside the playground."*



TAKE  
our  
VOICE  
SERIOUSLY

VOICE



LOWER the  
VOTING AGE 16



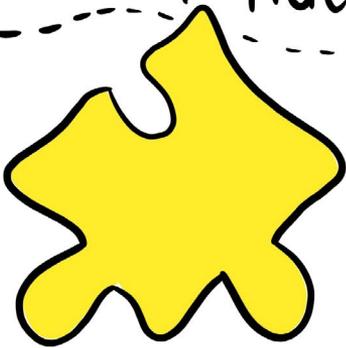
YO

# PARTICIPATION



EMPOWER ALL YOUNG  
PEOPLE to SPEAK UP  
FROM an EARLY AGE.

→ NOT  
CONSULTATION  
→ NOT A



# TEACH

more  
EMPATHY

more  
OPEN-MINDED



# CE

## YOUTH-LED GROUPS

I WANT more EVENTS LIKE TODAY. I REALLY FELT HEARD



## PARENTS

SOMETIMES they CAN'T HEAR ME!

CAN STUDENTS HAVE A SAY in HOW YEAR HEADS ARE APPOINTED?

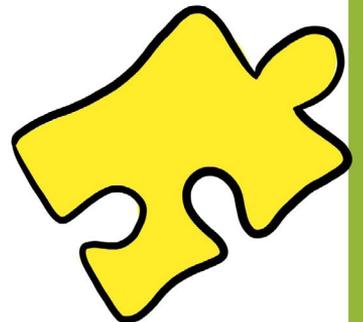


SAFE SPACES in SCHOOLS for DISCUSSIONS



## ERS

TRAINING for TEACHERS, YOUTH WORKERS and GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS



## 6. Voice

---

Children discussing the topic of voice were, firstly, asked the following question in the World Café:

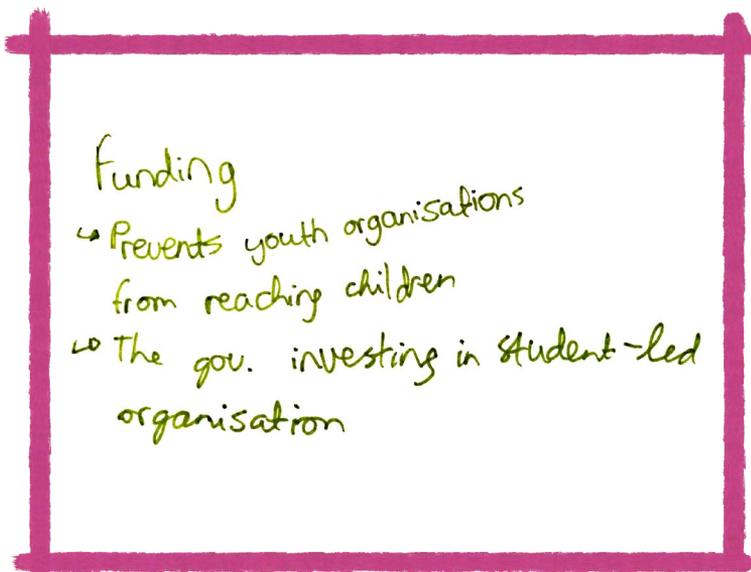
*How can the Government improve children's participation at home, at school and in society?*

The children made the following recommendations for change:

- Increase funding for youth and youth-led organisations
- Lower the voting age
- School-based changes
- Meaningful consultation with children

### 6.1 Increase funding for youth and youth-led organisations

Many children involved in the World Café believed that there needs to be increased funding for youth services, particularly for youth-led participative structures.



*“Funding.*

*Prevents youth organisations from reaching children.*

*The government investing in student-led organisations.”*

*“Lack of funding for students' unions is stopping active participation. More funding needed.”*

the government willing  
to provide a better  
funding.

*"The government willing to provide better funding."*

Some children acknowledged that while there is some government funding, they believe that it is not available at a local level and access can be unequal, which particularly affects younger children and children living in rural areas.

*"A structured budgetary process for youth work that ensured there was equal opportunities [to participate] across all counties."*

*"It's hard for some students if you are rural to have your voice heard."*

*"Limited funding means that younger people get left out."*

*"Structures need to be properly funded at a local level."*

More youth events  
which give young people  
more opportunities to share  
their opinions and get their  
voices out

*"More youth events which give young people more opportunities to share their opinions and get their voices out."*

*"[Our youth group] can't take more children to these forums because we don't have the funding."*

## 6.2 Lower the voting age

Many of the children believed that children's participation would increase if the voting age was lowered to sixteen.

There should be more consideration  
put into maybe getting the  
legal voting age down to 16.

For lack of more forgiving words,  
our world has been destroyed  
by the people who run it, before  
we even even got a say in any  
of it.

By the time we're all 18 and thrust  
out into the world, what state  
will it be left in?



"There should be more consideration spent into maybe getting the legal voting age down to 16. For lack of more forgiving words, our world has been destroyed by the people who run it, before we even even got a say in any of it. By the time we're all 18 and thrown out into the world, what state will it be left in?"

Not only did children recommend lowering the voting age, but also that children have a particular say in the government departments that affect them directly, such as Education and Children.

## Voting Age

Decrease the voting age to 16y/o

As seen in Scotland. (Regional/National)

Be able to vote for who the Minister of Education/Children is

ie- A list of Minister from the Party of the winner of the election picks 6 or more Ministers of Education/Children, and students of secondary schools and above vote.

"Voting Age.

Decrease the voting age to 16 years old. As seen in Scotland (Regional/National).

Be able to vote for who the Minister of Education and Children is, i.e. a list of Ministers from the party of the winner of the election picks 6 or more Ministers of Education and Children and students of secondary school and above vote."

Several children recommended that lowering the voting age should be accompanied by increased political and civic education.



vote @ 16

We need more education on different positions to allow 16 year olds to vote

"Vote at 16

We need more education on different positions to allow 16-year-olds to vote."

Lowered voting age  
needs to be accompanied  
by sufficient civic  
education (CSPE etc.)



students be made  
aware of consultations  
open to them

“Lowered voting age needs to be accompanied by sufficient civic education (CSPE etc.)”

“Without the education to support the right to vote, voting turnout amongst young people could be affected negatively as young people won’t understand the importance of voting.”

### 6.3 School based changes

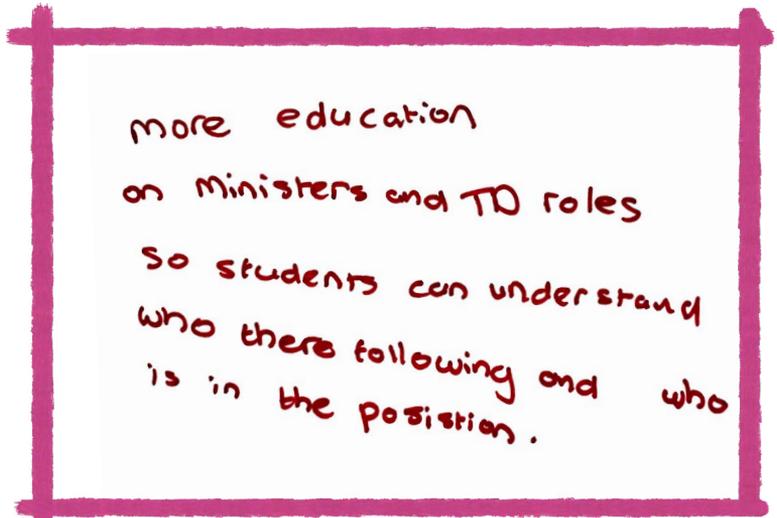
The children recommended several changes in school ranging from increased civic and political education; more student councils, and promoting participative youth groups in school.

Children recommend being educated on the current government ministers and policies.

Provide better Civic Education

“Provide better civic education.”

“More education on Ministers and TD roles so students can understand who they’re following and who is in the position.”

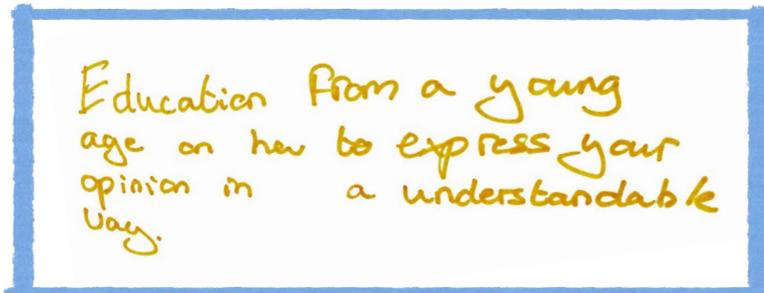


more education  
on Ministers and TD roles  
so students can understand  
who they're following and who  
is in the position.

Some children also believed that they need greater supports in schools in order to express themselves.

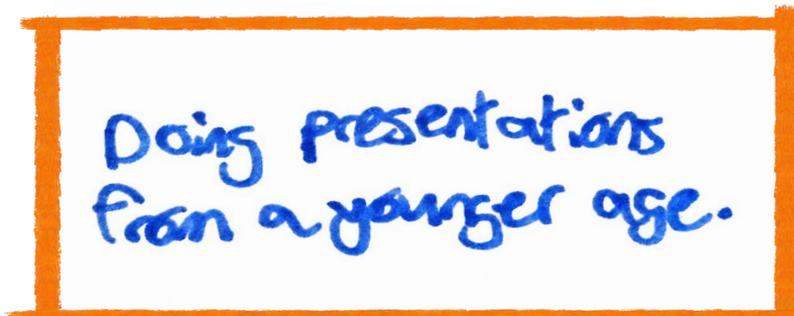
“Educating people on how to express their opinion.”

“People from upper class have been given the courses and opportunities to learn how to express themselves, whereas people from disadvantaged areas... or have less education do not have the skills to express themselves.”



Education from a young  
age on how to express your  
opinion in a understandable  
way.

“Education from a young age on how to express your opinion in an understandable way.”



Doing presentations  
from a younger age.

“Doing presentations from a younger age.”

*“Public Speaking needs to be done from a young age – in primary school.”*

Many children believed that school student councils could provide a forum for children to participate more actively in school and wider society.

*Empower student councils  
in schools more.*

*“Empower student councils  
in schools more.”*

*“Impactful student councils  
taken seriously – Student  
Council Charter.”*

*Impactful student  
Councils taken seriously*

*↳ Student Council Charter*

Others had suggestions on how student groups could influence their local county councils and schools.

*“Student Forums.*

*The creation of  
student forums for  
electoral districts  
or counties where  
student council  
members from  
every school in their  
electoral district or  
county are able to  
come together and  
address problems  
in school.”*

*Student Forums*

*→ The creation of student forums for  
electoral district - or counties where  
student council members from every school  
in their electoral district or county  
are able to come together and address  
problems in school.*

Many children acknowledged that there is lots of participation happening but they needed to be made aware of it and that school could be a good way to promote and advertise these opportunities.

"Students be made aware of consultations open to them."

students be made aware of consultations open to them

Actively promote youth activist groups + opportunities schools and groups

"Actively promote youth activist groups and opportunities to schools and groups."

"More awareness spread about youth organisations."

More awareness spread about youth organisations.

Promoting Opportunities  
↓  
European Union Opportunities  
Career Guidance, SPHE, CSPE, Posters

"Promoting opportunities

European Union opportunities, career guidance, SPHE, CSPE, posters."

include UN in  
CSPE → what  
European opportunities  
are available to  
students

"Include UN in CSPE  
– what European  
opportunities are  
available to students."

Some children believed that their parents should be made aware of the opportunities open to them.

Make parents aware  
of youth led / youth activism  
orgs. / what supports  
are in place for  
their children

"Make parents aware  
of youth led/youth  
activism orgs. What  
supports are in place  
for their children."

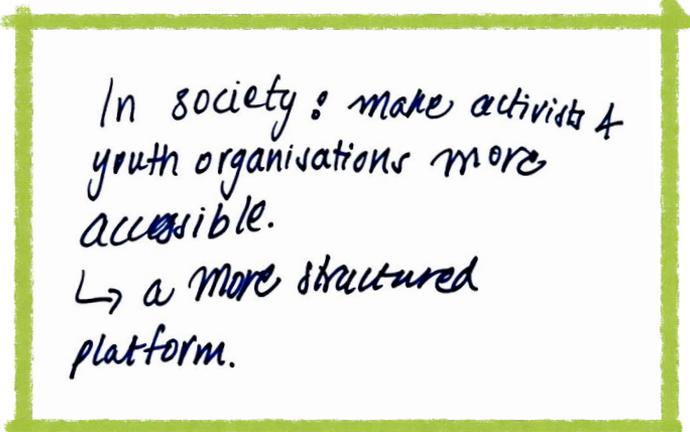
More information given to  
parents about how their children  
can participate

"More information  
given to parents  
about how their  
children can  
participate."

## 6.4 Meaningful consultation with children

Many children believed that their participation could be more meaningful. They made a number of recommendations including increased accessibility, equal access, increased transparency about where their views go and deepening the involvement of decision makers.

Some children believed that youth organisations were selective and only included some children.



In society: make activists & youth organisations more accessible.  
↳ a more structured platform.

*"In society: make activities and youth organisations more accessible."*

*A more structured platform."*

*"Not everyone gets to get into different organisations like Comhairle."*

*"Opportunities are not fair – people being voted for based on popularity not interest in government."*

*"Properly randomised youth assembly rather than nominations by certain organisations."*

*"No structured platform or network for young people to participate in. The groups seem selective e.g. OCO and National Youth Assembly."*

Other children believed that there needed to be more informal ways for them to give their views.

More informal ways  
for young people to  
be consulted  
e.g Comhairle alternative .

"More informal ways for young  
people to be consulted e.g.  
Comhairle alternative."

Many children wanted decision makers to be more accessible and visible in the consultation process and others wanted to increase the frequency of opportunities to express their views.

Debate Your Decision Makers /  
Meaningful youth participation

"Debate your  
decision makers

Meaningful youth  
participation."

Better politician / decision makers  
to children ratio at decision making  
consultations that affect young people.

"Better politician/decision maker to children ratio at decision making consultations that affect young people."

Surveys every  
year so government  
is kept up to date



*"Surveys every year so government is kept up to date."*

Crucially children want to see the results of their work.

Transparency  
of the political  
process → where  
do our recommendations  
end up?

*"Transparency of political process – where do our recommendations end up?"*

The second question that children considered was:

*What professionals should be trained in children's participation?  
Who should train them?*

The children identified several cohorts of professionals who needed training in children's participation:

- Teachers and Guidance Counsellors
- Mental health professionals

## **6.5 Teachers and Guidance Counsellors**

Many children believed that their teachers needed more training in participation to ensure that children had a chance to express their views in an education setting. Children felt that they needed more safe spaces and time to express their views in school. Some believed that teachers' personal views influenced what students were allowed to discuss.

*"[My teacher] skipped all the topics we wanted to do like LGBT and students should have a say in what they want to discuss."*

*"Schools are too busy to give time to the voice of young people. We need space – physically and in terms of time."*

*"Education act leaves a lot to be desired in the voice of the child."*

As a result, some children believed that students should have a say on how teachers are trained.

*"Young people having a voice in the design of teacher training."*

The children frequently voiced their frustrations about guidance counsellors in their schools. They believe that these teachers only focused on offering career guidance as opposed to mental health support. Many children advised that guidance counsellors are among those who need training in participation so they could facilitate more open conversations with children.

# Guidance Counsellors + Mental Health Counsellors

*"Guidance counsellors and mental health counsellors."*

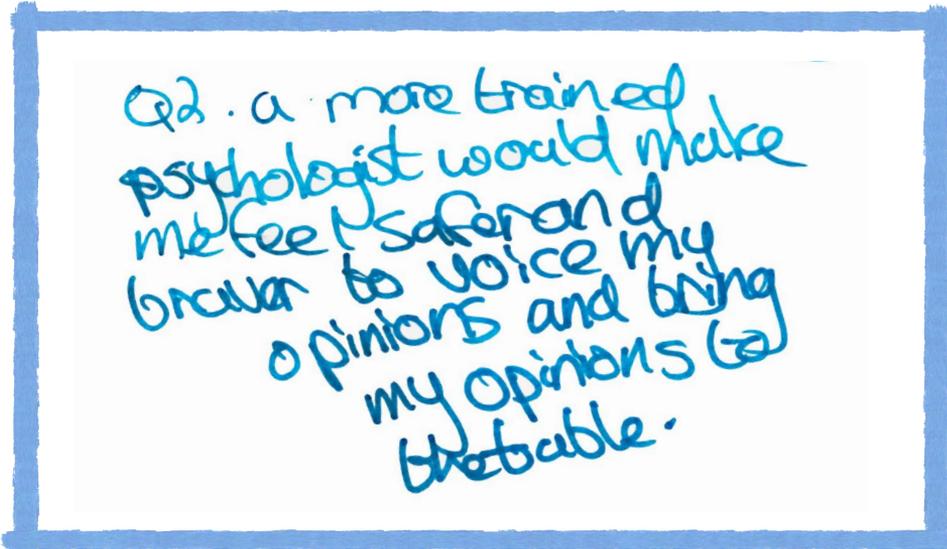
HAVE Guidance counsellors  
Specially TRAINED AND brought  
IN NOT AS teachers because  
Young people ARE willing  
to speak but the AVAILABILITY  
OF guidance counsellors  
IS the problem

*"Have guidance counsellors specifically trained and brought in not as teachers because young people are willing to speak."*

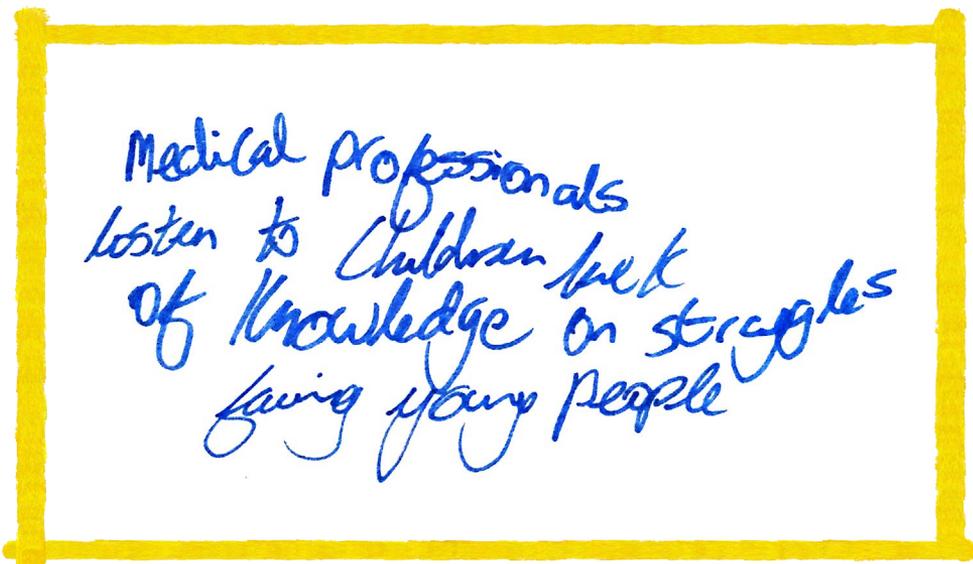
*"Mental health and guidance counsellors – encouraging young people to access child participation organisations such as Comhairle and ISSU."*

## 6.6 Mental health professionals

Many children recommended that medical professionals, particularly psychologists, should be trained in child participation.



"A more trained psychologist would make me feel safe and braver to voice my opinions and bring my opinions to the table."



"Medical professionals listen to children. [There is a] lack of knowledge on the struggles facing young people."

Other children pointed to the fact the Lundy model of participation is established in some areas of government and state services and that this could be replicated in other sectors.

*“Youth services are using the Lundy model but not schools, HSE etc. Maybe they should use it.”*

The children recommended that experienced children’s participation practitioners should deliver this training.

*“People who are doing youth participation practice and are passionate about it should train people to do this.”*



# SPECIAL PRO



WE ALL NEED A



BUILD ~~more~~ **more** HOUSES!

REBUILD DERELICT HOUSES

INFORMATION CENTRES

€  
FUN  
YOU  
V

# HOME



I HAVE NOWHERE to **STUDY**



I HAVE NO **PRIVACY**

MORE!

THEY MAKE a BIG IMPACT!

# YOUTH SER

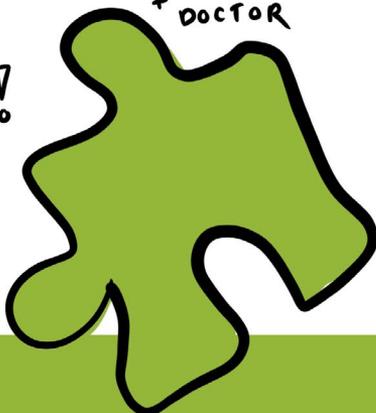
LANGUAGE SUPPORTS



SOCIAL WORKER + DOCTOR

for CHILDREN FLEEING WAR!

for ROMA CHILDREN



# INVEST in COMMUNIT



# PROTECTIONS

" I WANT AFFECTED CHILDREN to KNOW HOW POWERFUL THEIR VOICE CAN BE "

HOW MIGHT MARGINALISED GROUPS WORK together?

TRAVELLER  
ROMA  
ASYLUM SEEKERS

SPECIALIST YOUTH GROUPS



SERVICES



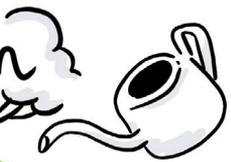
HEAR US  
SEE US



POLITICIANS MUST LISTEN TO MARGINALISED VOICES

TRAVELLER VISIBILITY in the MEDIA

~~BAN~~  
PRISONS for CHILDREN



STORIES

WALK A MILE in my SHOES before JUDGING.



## 7. Children In Need of Special Protections

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During the World Café discussions on children in need of special protections, the children were asked the following question:

*What are the most important things Government should do to meet the needs of vulnerable children such as children in care, children with disabilities, children seeking asylum, Traveller and Roma children and children in detention or the justice system?*

The children's recommendations in response to this question can be grouped into three themes:

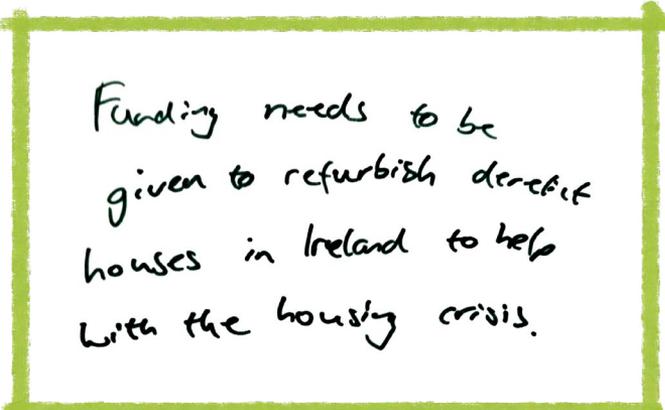
- Housing
- Language and legal supports for migrant and asylum-seeking children and unaccompanied minors
- Supports for children with disabilities

### 7.1 Housing

The children raised the issue of inadequate housing for vulnerable children. While it is difficult for children to provide recommendations on long-term housing policy, it was clear from the World Café that Traveller and Roma children, unaccompanied minors, and asylum-seeking children were seen to be affected very negatively by a lack of housing.

*"Increase funding to provide services to solve the housing crisis."*

*"Use derelict houses to provide more housing."*



Funding needs to be given to refurbish derelict houses in Ireland to help with the housing crisis.

*"Funding needs to be given to refurbish derelict houses in Ireland to help with the housing crisis."*

+ Solve the housing crisis

+ Arrange more funding for emergency situations

*"Solve the housing crisis."*

*"Arrange more funding for emergency situations."*

A number of children shared their personal experience of living in Direct Provision accommodation. One child who has been granted asylum but who is unable to secure housing explained:

*"I have been in a Direct Provision centre for 7 years. We have been granted asylum, but we are struggling to find housing. My mother is unwell. She is going to the doctor. It hurts. It is frustrating. There is housing policy to say that people should get housing. There is a gap between the law and in providing housing. There is the lack of housing, too, of course."*

Get homes when people have been granted asylum! Please!



*"Get homes when people have been granted asylum! Please!"*

once granted asylum  
Houses need to be  
given, to help them feel  
safe and more at home  
in Ireland as well as  
to help them as it can  
cause mental stress

"Once granted asylum houses need to be given, to help them feel safe and more at home in Ireland as well as to help as it can cause mental stress."

"Homes once granted asylum.

Seekers are provided accommodation while applying but not followed through once granted international protection.

{Not enough spaces}."

Homes, once granted asylum.

↳ Seekers are provided ~~sp~~ accommodation while applying but not followed through once granted international protection.

NOT Enough SPACES

Children also identified over-crowding, a lack of space to study and a lack of privacy as issues that need to be addressed, particularly for children living in Direct Provision and Roma children living in emergency accommodation.

Lack of houses.

I need a  
county council  
house pls  
I have no  
privacy.

"Lack of houses.

I need a county council house please.

I have no privacy."

Studies are affected by direct provision centres since no one has their own space to focus.

"Studies are affected by direct provision centres since no one has their own space to focus."

Although shelter is given there is not enough space given for people.

"Although shelter is given there is not enough space given for people."

provide money for asylum seekers to buy council housings and not throwing them into bad living conditions.

"Provide money for asylum seekers to buy council housing, and not throwing them into bad living conditions."

Some Roma children explained the challenges living within emergency homeless accommodation, stating;

*“We are in emergency accommodation. We have freedom to go out, but no supports.”*

*“To get a home to get space we need.”*

*“We are grateful for the place we have, but we do not have enough space or enough room.”*

One child summed up this issue stating:

*“Housing – if I had a magic wand, people need housing.”*

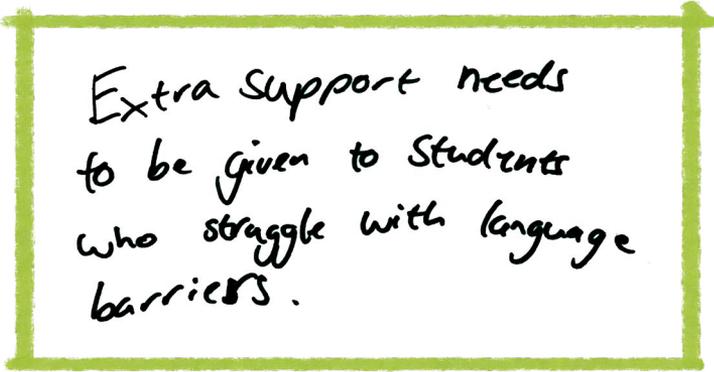
## **7.2 Language and legal supports for migrant and asylum-seeking children and unaccompanied minors**

Children raised the need for increased language support services for children whose first language is not English. Children believed that these supports were needed in schools particularly.



*Language support  
for children in schools / classes.*

*“Language support for children in schools/classes.”*



*Extra support needs  
to be given to students  
who struggle with language  
barriers.*

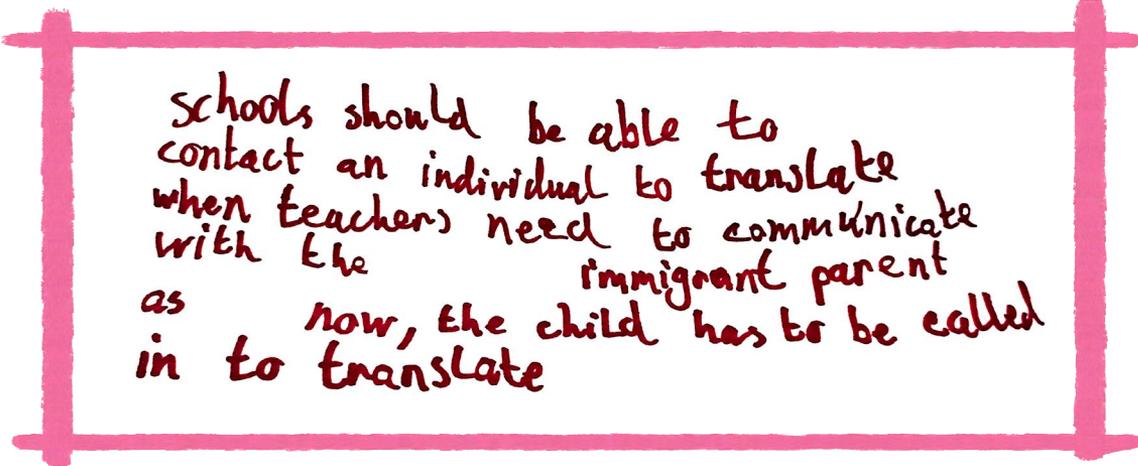
*“Extra support needs to be given to students who struggle with language barriers.”*

Some children from the Roma community felt disadvantaged by the lack of language support in mainstream school settings.

*“We were changed from a mainstream school to a language support school. In the mainstream school the teachers did not provide for language support accommodations. We want to be with the other young people.”*

*“We need language support to catch up with others in the class so that we do not feel less smart.”*

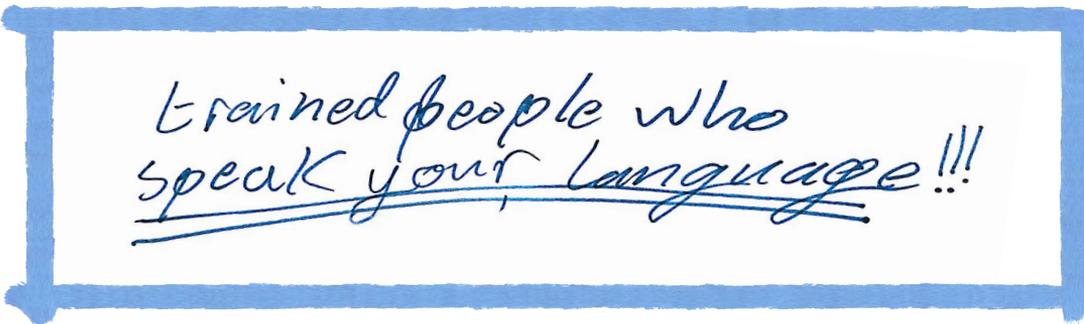
Several children from migrant backgrounds emphasised the need to have translation services for teachers to be able to speak directly with parents without using children as interpreters.



Schools should be able to contact an individual to translate when teachers need to communicate with the immigrant parent as now, the child has to be called in to translate

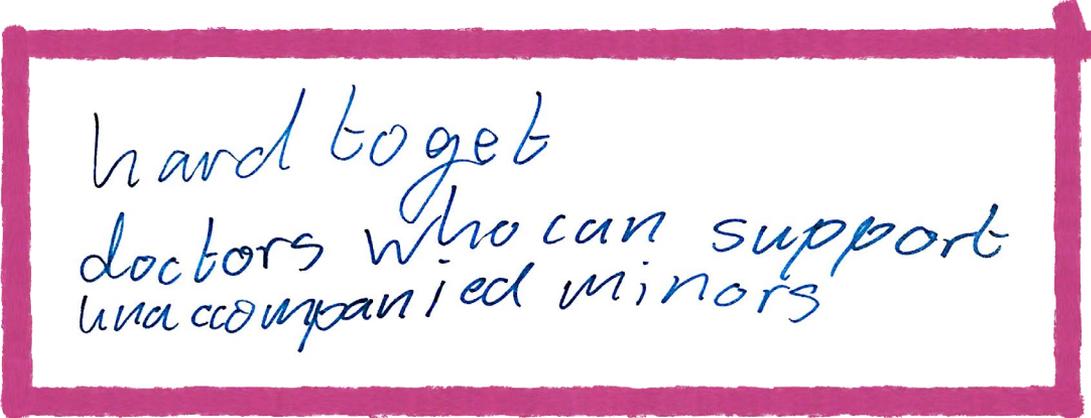
*“Schools should be able to contact an individual to translate when teachers need to communicate with the immigrant parent as now, the child has to be called in to translate.”*

As well as language supports in various settings such as with social workers and GPs, unaccompanied minors also believe that they need additional support services such as legal advice and help with contacting their families.



Trained people who speak your language!!!

*“Trained people who speak your language!!!”*



Hard to get  
doctors who can support  
unaccompanied minors

*"Hard to get doctors who can support unaccompanied minors."*

Many of the unaccompanied minors who attended the event stated:



I need a lawyer

*"I need a lawyer."*

*"I need to understand my legal rights."*

Some feared for their families' safety in their home country and wanted support from authorities to get in contact with them.

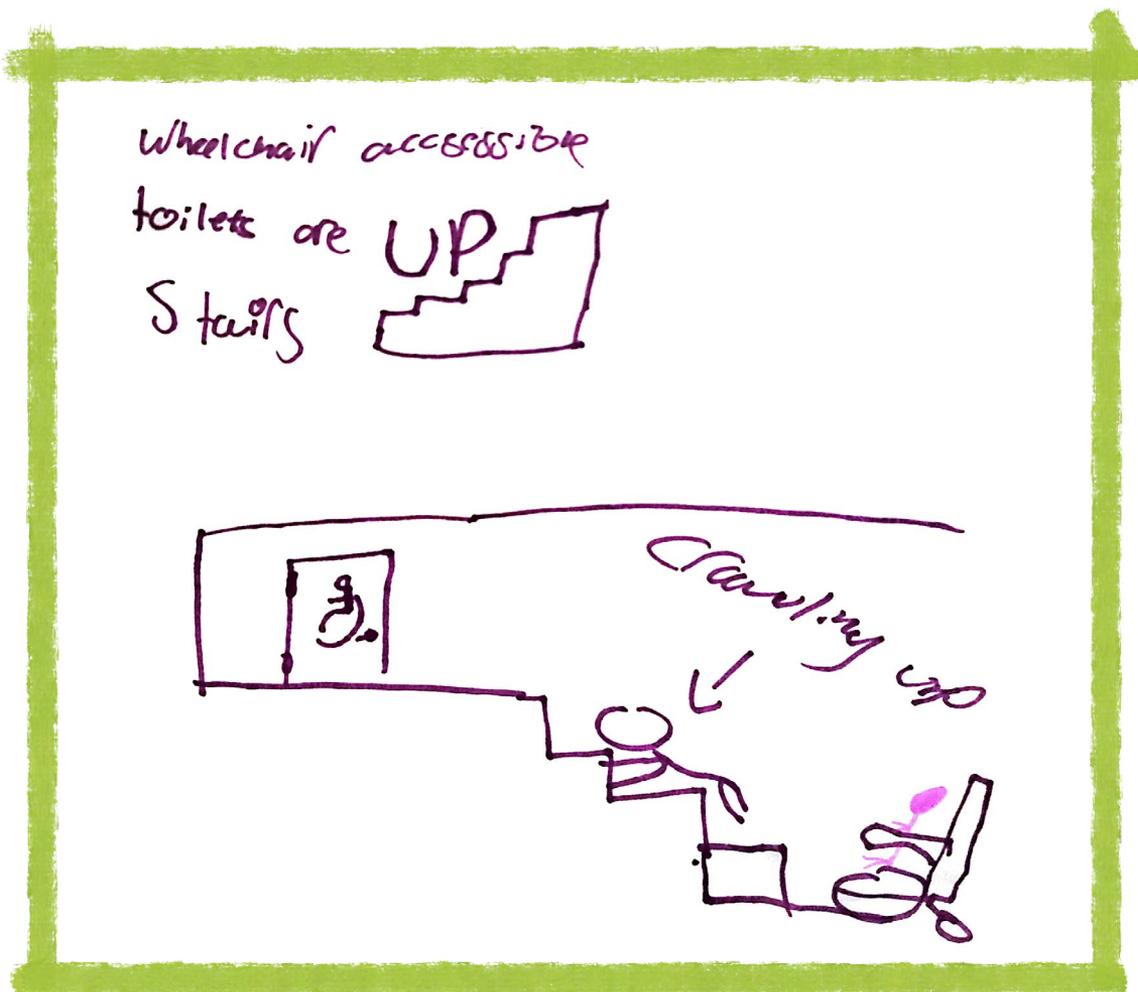
*"I do not know that my family are safe. I want help to contact my family by people in Ireland."*

Having listened to the unaccompanied minors in attendance, other children were very clear about the supports that should be offered to these children:

*"Children fleeing war should get supports for language quicker and easier, better supports in schools with translations etc. They should also get support from social workers and support workers."*

### 7.3 Supports for children with disabilities

In relation to disability supports, the children at the event were clear that further funding is needed to ensure that buildings are wheelchair accessible.



*“Wheelchair accessible toilets are up stairs. Crawling up.”*

Furthermore, the children recommended that all public spaces should be accessible, and that more funding should be given for equipment that would afford greater accessibility.

*“Playgrounds should have more equipment for children with disabilities.”*

*“Accessibility is a huge issue, government doesn’t support children and families enough with accessibility equipment like powered wheelchairs.”*

*“So many places, especially in rural towns where there is no accessible swings or equipment, I couldn’t imagine having a disability and being denied that experience. So many buildings are deemed wheelchair accessible but they’re actually not.”*

The second question asked in the World Café was:

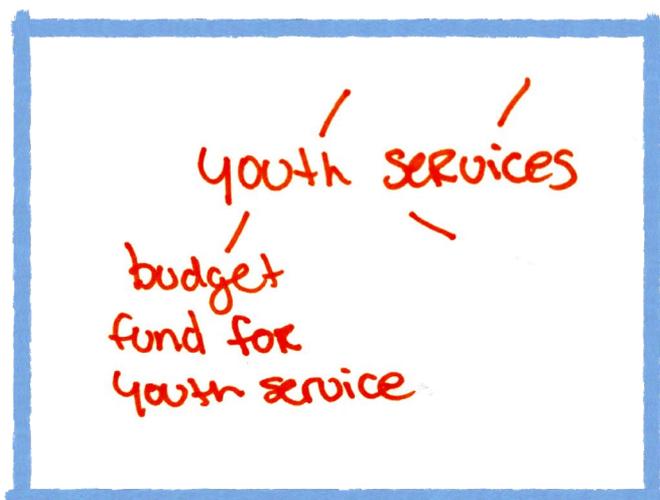
*How can we make sure that the voices of these children are heard?*

The children’s answers can be categorised into two recommendations;

- Greater investment in youth services
- More positive representation of marginalised groups

## 7.4 Greater investment in youth services

The most resounding recommendation for including the voice of the children in need of special protections was to provide more funding and investment in youth services.



*“Youth services  
Budget, fund for  
youth service.”*



*“Youth services.”*

More funding for youth services.

*"More funding for youth services."*

Many of the children in attendance were involved in youth services and valued the impact that it had on their communities.

*"The Youth Services are the core of building the community."*

Nevertheless, some children realised that it can be difficult for marginalised groups to join youth services and recognised that some specialised youth services may be needed.

Set up youth groups linked with government to help support people unheard in society. in spaces where the unheard voices feel safe instead of forcing them into political settings where they don't feel so uncomfortable.

*"Set up youth groups linked with the government to help support people unheard in society in spaces where the unheard voices feel safe instead of forcing them into political settings where they don't feel comfortable. "*

Setup more  
youth organisations.  
⇓  
that specialise  
in providing  
special protection  
needs heard  
to the Government.

*“Set up more youth organisations that specialise in providing special protection needs heard to the Government.”*

Several children emphasised the need for decision makers and government to make more of a conscious effort to hear from children who are marginalised.

*“Politicians need to go into young people’s spaces to listen and to hear the marginalised voice and not rely on the other way around.”*

Having listened to some of the experiences outlined by the children in need of special protections some children emphasised the need for solidarity.

*“Work together as marginalised groups as we have the same cause.”*

## 7.5 More positive representation of marginalised groups

The second recommendation on how to ensure that these children's voices were heard was representation and integration. The children involved in the World Café recommended more positive representation in the media and in politics.

positive media representation + representation  
of Roma people → de-alienise them

*"Positive media representation and representation of Roma people to de-alienise them."*

*"The bias in social media/media points to only the bad things that happen in [our community]. We are being judged, being discriminated against. Invest in the community to point to the good things that happen in [our area]."*

media - negative  
changed  
to positive

*"Media - negative changed to positive."*

*"We need more representation of minorities in government as role models."*

# Appendix One

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## Summary of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Concluding Observations to Ireland (what Ireland should do for children!)

### Education

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#### Summary:

#### Ireland should

- Make education easy to access. Make sure it includes all children, including children with disabilities, Traveller and Roma children, children in poverty and refugee and migrant children.
- Reform the Leaving Cert and make other education options available.
- Train teachers and others working in education in children rights.
- Improve the teaching of children's rights in school.

#### Some more details

- Change the law so that the children and grandchildren of past pupils do not get priority for places in schools.
- Provide financial support to cover the hidden costs of education like school trips.
- Have national guidelines for how schools use suspension and exclusion.
- Collect information that tells us about disadvantaged children's school experience.
- Provide individual support and attention, as well as accessible schools and transport for children with disabilities. This should apply to pre-school education and care as well.
- Help Roma and Traveller children get more from education. Develop, properly fund and evaluate the national Traveller education strategy.
- Make sure that parents of refugee children know how to register their children in school. Make sure refugee children have good education in different languages and that respects their culture, and transport to afterschool activities.
- Make sure that schools use the guidelines on reduced timetables

(shorter school days or weeks) properly. Stop using these timetables so much with Traveller children and children with disabilities.

- Use the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic to change the Leaving Certificate. Find different ways to assess learning, particularly for disadvantaged children.
- Ban the use of restraint (like holding a student down) and seclusion (isolating a student in a room on their own) in schools, training centres, crèches etc.
- Change the law so that Traveller culture and history is taught in all schools. Take all racist and negative stereotyping of ethnic minority groups out of textbooks and subjects. Create education materials that promote respect for all children without discrimination.
- Improve the teaching of children's rights and the UNCRC in schools. Improve the teaching of children's rights in the training of teachers and education professionals.

## Equality and Non-Discrimination

---

**Summary:** Committee said that urgent action is needed in this area.

### Ireland should

- Make sure that all equality laws specifically protect children and that children know how to report discrimination (being treated negatively because of their religion, nationality, sexual orientation, race etc.)
- Launch the National Anti-Racism Plan and involve children in its actions.
- Train all professionals working with children, including teachers and Gardaí, on how to protect children from discrimination

### Some more details

- Make sure that laws on discrimination include and protect children.
- Finish the review of the Equality Acts and follow up on its recommendations.
- Make sure that children know how to report discrimination, and that discrimination against children is properly investigated and punished.
- Launch the national action plan against racism. Make sure that children of minority groups take part in evaluating and making the most of the plan.

- Have strong measures to protect all vulnerable children from discrimination. Vulnerable children should have access to suitable places to live, health care, education and a decent standard of living.

## **Services that Support Children: Mental Health, Children with Disabilities and Children in Care**

---

### **Summary:**

Mental health: the UN Committee said that urgent action is needed on children's mental health.

### **Ireland should**

- Make sure that mental health counselling and treatment for children is available.
- Increase funding for actions to prevent mental health problems, to provide information, to encourage good mental health and treatment for children who need it.
- Provide services in schools.
- Properly staff the mental health system.
- Make it illegal to put children in adult mental health hospitals or wards.
- Hear and consider children's views on mental health services
- Take action to support Traveller and Roma children's mental health.

### **Some more details**

- Make sure that mental health therapy and programmes for children are available.
- Increase funding to make sure that mental health policy is acted on and carefully checked.
- Put mental health promotion, screening for mental health issues and early intervention services in schools at all levels and in communities.
- Make sure there are enough qualified professionals to meet children's mental health needs without long waiting times.
- Regularly follow-up on children in treatment and carefully check on medications.
- Make it illegal to place children in adult psychiatric units/wards.

- Make it law that children have a say in all decisions about their mental health care and have help from an independent person.
- Push on with the Traveller and Roma mental health action plans and develop a special mental health support service for children of minority ethnic groups, such as Travellers, Roma or migrants, particularly for those who have experienced racism.
- Invest in preventing mental health difficulties, tackle the causes of suicide and poor mental health among children and include children's views when developing services.
- Provide enough resources to expand mental health support and information services for children.

## Children in Care

- Invest in family placements.
- Make sure children can report any abuse they experience in care placements.
- Make sure that children in care are visible and heard.

## Children with Disabilities

- Invest in and improve access to all services and supports
- Make sure the children's voices are heard and considered
- Have a public campaign to fight discrimination

## Communities and Leisure

---

### Summary:

#### Ireland should

- Make sure that all children can take part in leisure, play, arts and cultural activities.
- Have strong policies and programmes on children's rights to leisure.

## Some more details

- Ireland should improve the Sports Action Plan, the National Network of Sports Inclusion Disability Officers and the Creative Youth Plan;
- Make sure that girls, children with disabilities, asylum-seeking and migrant children and children living in poverty can take part in sports, play and leisure activities;
- Fully involve children in planning, designing and monitoring policies and programmes on leisure and play.

## Voice

---

### Summary:

#### Ireland should

- Make sure that all children have the chance to have their views heard and considered in their family, their school, their community, in courts and with policy-makers.
- Train all adults working with children on the right of the child to be heard.
- Hold a vote to allow the Government to reduce the age of voting to 16 years.

#### Some more details

- Make sure that all children can express their views and have them taken into account in all decisions that affect them. This includes children involved in court cases, including court cases about their family situations.
- Provide free, expert support to children involved in court cases to make sure their views are heard and properly considered.
- Take action to make sure children's views are heard and considered within their family, their community, their school and policy-making at all levels.
- Make sure that all adults that work with children, including teachers and childcare professionals, are trained on the right of the child to express their views.
- Hold a referendum (a vote to change the Irish Constitution, which is our highest set of laws) on lowering the voting age to 16 years. If the voting age is lowered, then support children to use their vote by providing training on how politics work at local and national level and human rights education.

# Children in Need of Special Protection Measures

---

## Summary:

Migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children, children of minorities, such as Travellers and Roma, and children in the criminal justice system all need special protection.

## Ireland should

- End Direct Provision by 2024.
- Improve the processing of applications for refugee status.
- Make sure all migrant, asylum-seeking and refugee children have prompt access to education, accommodation and other necessary services.
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years.
- Use detention only as a last resort.
- Set up children's courts around the country.
- Respect the rights of children in the criminal justice system to be heard.
- Train all professionals in youth justice on children's rights and negative stereotyping.
- Take action to stop discrimination in the youth justice system.

## Some more details

### Migrant, Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children

- End the need for refugees arriving from outside the European Union to have a visa.
- Properly assess the needs of unaccompanied children when they arrive and speed up applications for the legal right to live in Ireland.
- Involve a range of professionals in assessing the age of unaccompanied people who say that they are children. Treat them as children until this is proved wrong.
- Develop national guidelines on protecting and upholding the rights of unaccompanied children.
- Make reuniting with family easier for unaccompanied children and make sure that decisions are in the best interest of the child.

## Children of minority groups

- Set a clear timeline for the next national Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.
- Have stronger ways to make sure Traveller and Roma children enjoy all of their rights
- Make the rights of Travellers as an official minority group much clearer.

## Children in the criminal justice system

- Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 12 years to at least 14 years of age.
- Make sure that no children below the age of 18 are prosecuted as adults.
- Consider setting up children's courts around the country and make sure that every child can access a children's court and/or specialized judges and legal professionals.
- Provide training on children's rights and child-friendly proceedings for judges, lawyers, Gardaí and other relevant people working with children in the justice system.
- Use detention as a last resort and for the shortest possible time.
- Detain children as little as possible before their trials. If children are detained before trial, this should be regularly reviewed by the court.
- Use things like diversion, mediation and counselling as much as possible for children accused of crimes, instead of bringing them to court. Where children are brought to court, use probation or community service instead of detention where possible.
- Look at why more children from minority groups are in detention than other groups and find ways to tackle this.
- Consult with children and their families to address racism and racial stereotyping by the Gardaí.
- Provide better supports to help children in their communities when they leave detention.
- Opt into, or adopt the most important elements of, the European Union directive (rules) on safe procedures for children in criminal cases.



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