

Whose Right is it anyway?

Children's Rights in Ireland by Genevieve Pierce

The population of Children (0 – 14 yrs of age) in Ireland according to the Central Statistics office is 827,428.

These children represent 4.7% of the total population (3,917,000) in Ireland.

Children and young people have rights and responsibilities. In fact, rights and responsibilities are very closely linked.

'Children's rights' are human rights for children or young people under 18 years of age.

Ireland is a member of the United Nations and in 1989 the United Nations held a Convention on the Rights of the Child. At this convention 41 rights for children were declared, below is a summary of these rights:

All children, from birth to 18 years have:

- the right to life;
- the right to a name and nationality;
- the right to be with their parents or those who will care for them best;
- the right to have a say about things that affect them;
- the right to have ideas and say what they think;
- the right to practice their religion;
- the right to meet with other children;
- the right to get information they need;
- the right to special care, education and training, if needed;
- the right to health care;

- the right to enough food and clean water;
- the right to free education;
- the right to play;
- the right to speak their own language;
- the right to learn about and enjoy their own culture;
- the right not to be used as a cheap worker;
- the right not to be hurt or neglected;
- the right not to be used as a soldier in wars;
- the right to be protected from danger;
- the right to know about their rights and responsibilities.

(this is a summary of extract from the Convention on the Rights of the Child)

In 1992, the Irish Government "ratified" the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

When a government "ratifies" the UN Convention on the Rights on the Child, it promises to do everything it can to make the rights named in this agreement a reality for all children and young people in a particular country. The Irish Government has a duty to keep this promise.

A group of 10 people who are expert in the field



of children's rights, monitor whether countries are keeping this promise. This group is called the "UN Committee on the Rights of the Child". It reads reports that each country has to send to the Committee every few years. These reports state what the country has been doing to protect and respect children's rights. Ireland made its first report in 1996 and will be sending in a second report soon.

When the Committee has read a country's report, it makes suggestions about what a country should do to improve children's rights.

Some of the suggestions it made for Ireland were to:

- * Create a national plan for children and young people
- * Set up a special office to protect and promote children's rights that is led by an 'Ombudsman for Children' or a 'Children's Commissioner'

In 2000, the Government created a national plan for children and young people Ireland, called The National Children's Strategy. Many of the promises in this plan reflect what children and young people have said the strategy should deal with.

In April 2002, a law was passed to set up an 'Office of Ombudsman for Children' a special office that will protect and promote children's rights. Any child or young person with a problem will be able to go and talk to the Ombudsman for Children. Emily Logan has been appointed the Ombudsman for Children in Ireland. Lots of information and helpful advice on the Office of the Ombudsman for Children can be found on the website www.oco.ie or telephone 1890 654 654

To steal the words of a political figure, if I may, " ..a lot done, a lot more to do..

The **Children Rights Alliance** - a collation

of 78 non governmental organisations, founded in 1996, are concerned with the rights and needs of children in Ireland - have identified the need to address the omissions and weaknesses in the Irish Constitution, in relation to Children's fundamental rights.

The Alliance has called for a constitutional change to ensure that children's rights are adequately protected in the Irish Constitution. The Alliance works to secure the full implementation in Ireland of the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

To find out more about what the National Children's Strategy says, contact the National Children's Office (Telephone 01 418 0582 or Email: child_strategy@health.gov.ie) and ask them to send you a booklet on the National Plan for Children and Young People.

Budget 2005

Budget 2005 proved disappointing to those involved in Childcare. Other than the expected increase in Child Benefit, there was nothing new announced for parents, Childminders or childcare providers with regard to childcare.

Whilst temporarily deflated, *Childminding Ireland* will continue to advocate for the measures requested in our Pre-Budget Submission to be implemented.

If your new years resolution is to keep on top of your accounts, make sure to order our accounts disc, at the special price of €25.