

Count Me In



Children

www.ul.ie/doingcommunityresearch

Children's Rights

Children's rights are human rights for all children and young people under 18 years of age. On 20 November 1989, after ten years of discussion, a set of rights was created for children and young people, called the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This human rights treaty sets out what governments must do to ensure children and young people everywhere have a good life. It describes all the things that children need in order to get the most from life.

On 28 September 1992, the Irish State ratified the UNCRC and therefore committed itself to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of children in Ireland.

The right

- ♦ To affection, love and understanding.
- ♦ To education
- ♦ To full opportunity for play and recreation.
- ♦ To a name and a nationality.
- ♦ To a standard of living good enough for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
- ♦ To be first to receive relief in times of disaster.
- ♦ To be protected from being treated unfairly or having to work in conditions that are bad for their health or prevents them from growing and getting an education.
- ♦ To enjoy those rights regardless of race, religion, nationality or social origin.
- To be brought up in the spirit of peace and universal brotherhood.

How do we Hear Children's Voices?

However with gaps in law, policy and practice mean that some children remain vulnerable and are not receiving the full support of the State.

Refer to:

<http://www.oco.ie>

<http://www.childrensrights.ie>

<http://www.barnardos.ie>

Children's Experience of School

Immigrants were asked about their children's school experience - Generally these experiences seem positive.

People with Refugee status and/or seeking Asylum -
Of the 72 Respondents,
30 had children attending schools.

11 had children at secondary School.

All but one of the respondents had met their children's teachers, most of them quite often

4 reported that they had met teachers only once.

Numbers of immigrant schoolchildren are unevenly dispersed across the schooling system with especially heavy concentrations at certain schools.

- ♦ At primary level the Ennis Educate Together school where 49 of the 178 children with immigrant parents are from Roma families, Czech and Slovak.
- ♦ The largest concentrations of Nigerian children in primary schools are at the Holy Family Junior School (43), at Scoil Christ Ri (33) and at CBS Bunscoil (34).
- ♦ In Secondary Schools the breakdown of immigrant school children is much lower. Ennis Community College having the largest amount with 66 pupils followed by Rice College (54).

Celebrating Diversity at Schools

For all children teachers made an effort in celebrating and highlighting difference in schools

Sometimes the children don't want their differences celebrated.

In relation to religion some Children from Eastern Europe returned to their home countries to make their holy communion

Some parents of the Nigerian community have had children baptised into the Roman Catholic Church to allow them to make their holy communion.

People with work permits and visa:

21 who completed questionnaires indicated they had children at Clare Schools.

Their children's experiences seemed to have been positive. 18 of our respondents had met the teachers of their children, seventeen of them often.

Three of them suggested that their children were unhappy, the rest reported that they were settled and a number chose the 'settled and happy' responses.

Most parents thought teachers were supportive and that their children liked them.

Two of the migrant workers had children with special educational needs and these needs were being met at school.

When asked to choose a phrase to describe their children's experiences at school

21 claimed their children were '*very settled and happy*'.

5 respondents indicated that their children '*seem to be settled*';

4 respondents reported that their children seemed to be '*fairly settled and happy*';

24 confirmed their children were doing well in their classes

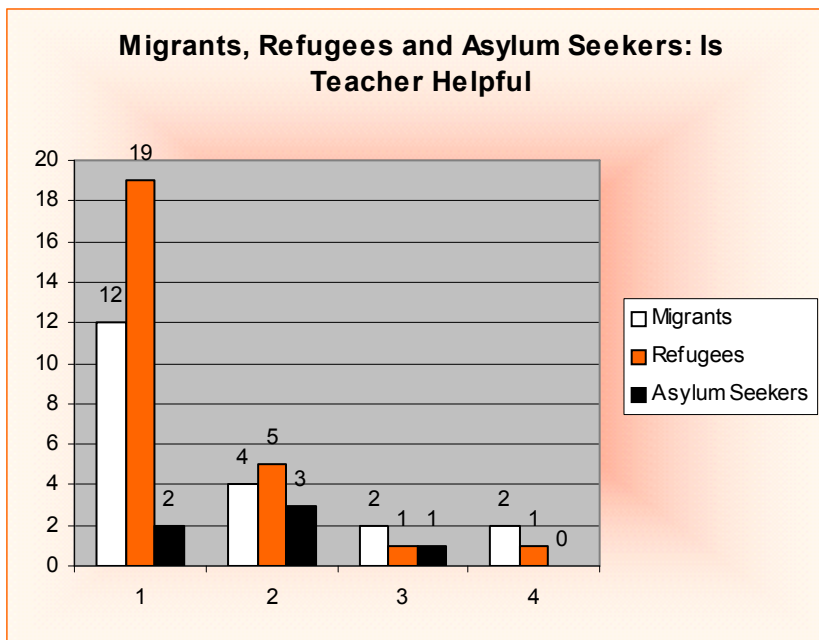
3 claimed that after initial difficulties their children were making progress.

4 respondents reported that they had children who found the classes bewildering or difficult and only one reported that their child encountered language difficulties.

Children's Experience of School

When asked whether teachers had been helpful and whether their children appeared to like their teachers.

- ♦ The responses were broadly favourable with more 20 of the 31 respondents reporting helpful and supportive teachers.
- ♦ 2 suggesting that teachers paid their children no attention.
- ♦ 1 indicated that their child was nervous of their teacher.
- ♦ 2 reported that they had children with special needs
- ♦ 1 claimed that those needs were not being addressed.



Key:

1. Teacher is helpful;
2. Children seem to like him/her;
3. Teacher pays them no attention;
4. Children are nervous of their teacher

Traveller Children's Experience

Overall these experiences seem positive out of 35 parents;

- ♦ 12 believed that their children were very happy at school
- ♦ 9 fairly happy
- ♦ 14 seemed to be okay
- ♦ When asked if their children attended an after school homework club out of 34
 - ♦ Parents, 9 replied that they did,
 - ♦ 25 responding that their children did not

Roma Children's Experience

The temporary nature of nomadism has resulted in a large amount of absenteeism amongst Roma children. One of the biggest concerns expressed in our research was of children dropping out of school with poor levels of English.

Schools with high concentrations of Roma children needed additional language teaching support badly.

Children from East European countries were also likely to be affected by language issues and also by inappropriate class placement as a consequence of the lack of standardised educational attainment testing procedures.

Parents perceptions about their children's experience with teachers were broadly very positive.

Children as translators?

The social constraints provided by limited language acquisition amongst ethnic minorities are varied. In some cases, poor English language skills foster ghettoisation and marginalisation of immigrant group. While in other cases a lack of English language skills can provide additional stresses and strains to family life, causing disproportionate burdens to be placed on more proficient linguists.

For example impacts of lack of accessible and affordable translation resources is disproportionately borne by children of families with poor language proficiency.

The difficulties regarding children as familial translators were noted in our research in particular amongst Roma Children in trying to communicate with parents, health workers and teachers often have to depend on children for translation

Traveller Children

35 parents were asked if their children made friends at school and responses were:

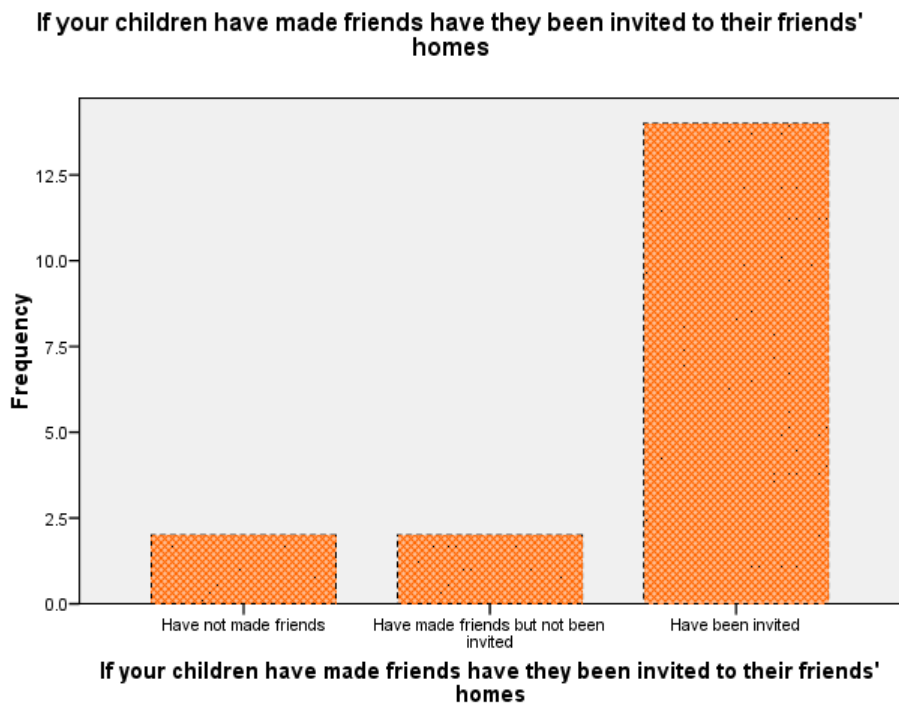
14 said -mainly with other Traveller children

12 said - with other Irish children

5 said - with other ethnic minorities

3 said - with their neighbours children

1 said - They had not made friends



Traveller Questionnaire 33 Replies

When Traveller parents were asked if their children attended a youth club out of the 49 respondents –

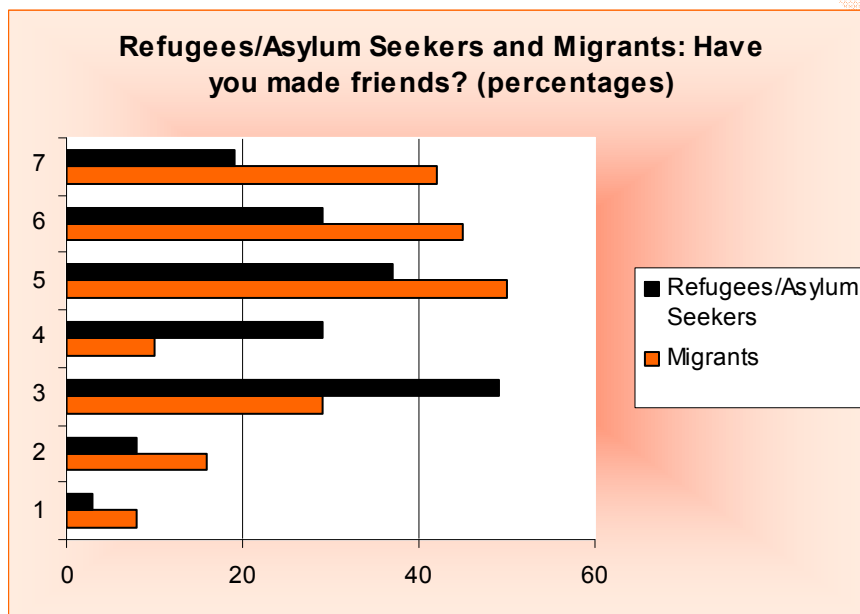
- ♦ 42 said No
- ♦ 7 said Yes

Overall parents provided reassuring evidence that an important way in which they were able to develop fresh social connections in an area is through their children attending school.

Parents said in focus groups and from questionnaires that they were able to develop local friendships quite widely though meeting the parents of their children's classmates.

For example, among 52 respondents who were interviewed through the questionnaire directed at refugee and asylum seekers 27 had made friends with local Irish people. Of these, 21 agreed that they had made friends at school.

Among these respondents the largest national group were 15 Nigerians, and of these 8 had formed local friendships through this route.



Key

- 1 – Not really;
- 2 – Only Social contact with other migrants/asylum seekers with whom I live
- 3 - Have made friends more widely within the asylum seeker/migrant community;
- 4 – With parents of children’s friends at school;
- 5 – With local Irish people;
- 6 – Have made friends with compatriots who live in Ennis;
- 7 – Have made friends with people in the immigrant community who are not compatriots

Not everybody’s experience was completely positive. A family had just moved into a new neighbourhood in which they were the only African household. They were beginning to make friends, but they had reasons to be wary about the interactions between their children and local residents.

In the locality in which they had lived earlier, their children had formed friendships with neighbouring Irish children and the parents of the other children complained to the Gardaí. Gardaí arrived during the night and accused his children of harassment. The incident led to the family moving house.

Children and Direct Provision

What is it like for children in direct provision?

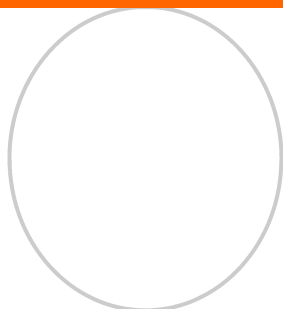
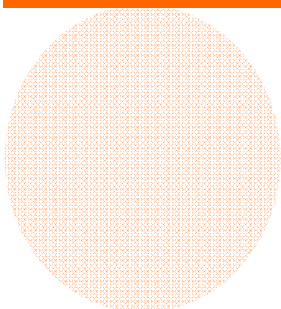
Knockalisheen is a Direct Provision Centre, in December 2008 it had an occupancy of 257.

Research undertaken by the HSE (Collopy:2009) through consultations with children were asked to design homes. Not one of the thirteen children designed homes with a lounge or kitchen. Their pictures indicated the priority was a separate bedroom. The exercise helped to underline the major problem that arises from the kind of accommodation that is provided: it imposes an impoverishment of family life, and as both the children's designs and the focus group's complaints suggest, the lack of privacy is felt deeply.

Children of school-going age attend schools in Meelick, Co. Clare and in Limerick City. They are collected by bus. On return from school they complete their homework in their rooms, no separate study space is available residents reported.

Parents receive money so that they can buy school uniforms but not for the school-books that are a requirement for many lessons. They must purchase the workbooks from their €19.10 weekly allowance.

While there is a universal right to education for children in Ireland until they have completed the second-level cycle, this does not extend to post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLC) or to third-level education. Migrant students from outside the EU, except for those who are granted full refugee status, will usually find that they are expected to pay the non-EU fee, which acts as a barrier and effectively excludes them in practice in the vast majority of cases.



Children and Direct Provision

Children are not allowed visitors from outside the Centre and this obviously curtails any prospects they may have of making friends at school for their classmates cannot visit them.

In Knockalisheen there is a pre-school crèche that is open for two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon on weekdays. It can only take 15 children at most and there are many more children of pre school age. According to the residents, the crèche is only supposed to be used by parents who do courses – it is not intended to accommodate all pre-school children.

What about facilities for children and young people? In the summer when it is dry children can play outside: there are swings and other playground equipment.

There was a playroom, but it was turned into an adult recreation room after the men's arrival in 2003. The room is now equipped with a pool table. Respondents reported a number of incidents where children were harshly discouraged from entering the room. After a series of such incidents, the Centre's management prohibited the children from entering the playroom, an embargo that managers had maintained despite complaints about the lack of children's play facilities.

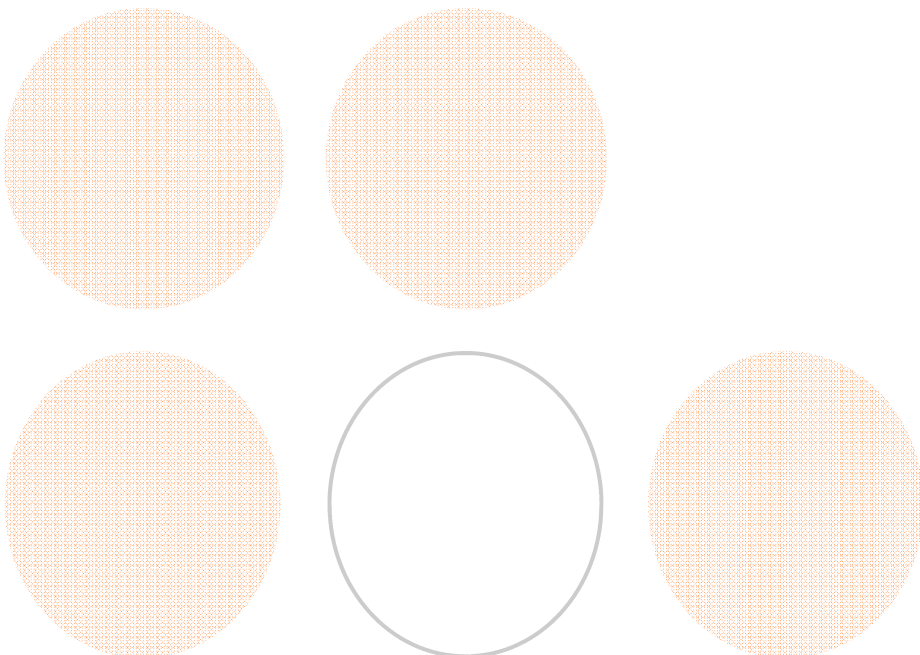
Research with teenagers found that both Limerick and Clare Youth Services provided activities, however within Knockalisheen there was very little to do they had no access to the games room; no friends were allowed to visit and there was no late bus service to Limerick city after 5 pm

Conclusion

We did this research in 2007.

Since then much has changed due to the economic climate with budgets cuts being made in particular in education for learning support/resource teachers. This will be impacting on all children that were in our study.

Our research indicated that integration into a community begins both for the children themselves and for the parent at school level. Therefore support and resources to promote integration into the education system is vital.



Contacts

Ombudsman for Children's Office

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Barnardos

Christchurch Square, Dublin 8

Email: info@barnardos.ie

Phone: 1850 222 300

Children's Rights Alliance

4 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2

Email: info@childrensrights.ie

Phone 01662 9400

Ennis CDP

Elevation Park, Clon Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

Contact Person: Colette Bradley,

Email: enniscdp@eircom.net

Phone: 065 68 69026

Clare Immigrant Support Centre

Unit 13, Carmody Street Business Park, Carmody Street, Ennis, Co. Clare

Contact Person: Orla Ní Eilí

Email: cisc@eircom.net

Phone: 065 6822026

Citizens Information Service

Bindon Lane, Bank Place, Ennis, Co Clare

Contact Person: Paul Woulfe

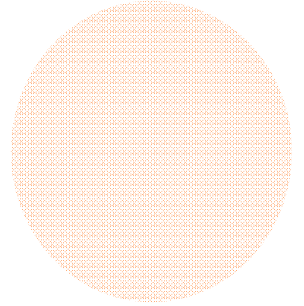
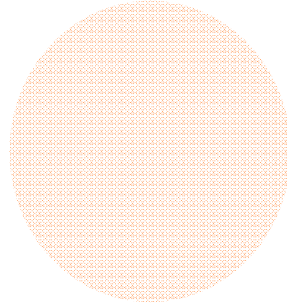
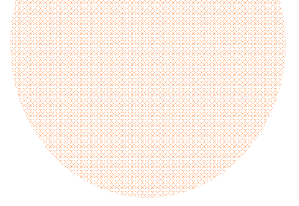
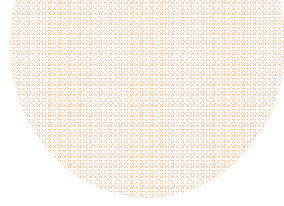
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Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://tiny.cc/hBhIB>

Notes





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