

Wexford Children and Young People Services Committee

Equality and Human Rights Statement

2016

Introduction

This statement reflects our commitment to address equality and human rights concerns for all children and young people and, particularly, for those disadvantaged by discrimination, inequality or human rights abuses. We have a particular focus on the grounds of gender and gender identity, civil status, family status (carers and lone parents), age, disability, sexual orientation, race (migrants and Black and minority ethnic groups, including Travellers and Roma), religion, and socio-economic status.

This statement fulfills our obligations under the Irish Human Rights Equality and Commission Act 2014 (S.42) to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and protect human rights.

This statement will inform the development, implementation and evaluation of the WCYPSC plan in a manner that reflects available resources and alignment with the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures strategy.

Values

A particular set of values underpins our commitment to equality and human rights and shapes our ambition to advance the promotion and achievement of equality, the elimination and prevention of discrimination, and the protection and fulfillment of human rights.

These values are dignity, inclusion, social justice, democracy and autonomy, with the following agreed definitions.

Dignity is about human worth. It involves children and young people being valued and respected. It is about the esteem in which children and young people are held and their standing in society. Dignity involves valuing difference and diversity among children and young people. Its starting point is ensuring the absence of cruel or degrading treatment, harassment and discrimination.

WCYPSC seeks to ensure that all children and young people are valued and respected, having regard to the right to dignity of each child and young person.

We, therefore, wish to address the following equality and human rights issues:

- Bullying, harassment, discrimination and isolation experienced by a diversity of children and young people in a range of institutional and community settings.
- The experience of children and young people in the education system, in particular where there is a lack of valuing of difference and diversity.
- Organisations that lack capacity, resources and knowledge to respond appropriately to the needs and aspirations of children and young people and to understand and adjust for diversity among children and young people.
- The need for protection and places of safety for children and young people in emergencies, including for children and young people in contexts of domestic violence.

- The manner in which care is delivered for children and young people with disabilities in institutional and community settings.
- Inappropriate facilities for the detention of young people.

Inclusion is about children and young people having a sense of belonging and being a part of something. It is about children and young people being connected and involves reaching out to all children and young people. Inclusion requires dismantling barriers to participation.

WCYPSC seeks to ensure that the attitudinal, organisational and cultural barriers to inclusion of children and young people are identified and challenged, that opportunities for active participation by children and young people are promoted and supported, and that children and young people have access to and connection with their peers, communities, and society.

We, therefore wish to address the following equality and human rights issues:

- Rural isolation experienced by children and young people with reduced provision for rural areas and reduction of rural outreach services.
- Lack of services and facilities to enable children and young people to engage with each other generally and within their diverse communities.
- The need for particular steps to enable participation in society and independent living for children and young people with disabilities.
- Alienation experienced by some groups of children and young people as they are left waiting for necessary supports alongside a lack of institutional awareness and understanding as to why behavioural issues emerge.
- Barriers to participation including those arising from family poverty, language, and inaccessible venues and transport for children and young people with disabilities.

Social Justice is about redistribution, fairness and balance in relation to access to resources for all groups of children and young people. It involves a concern for who benefits in relation to employment and social goods such as education, health, and accommodation. It is about children and young people being able to contribute to society.

WCYPSC seeks to ensure that children and young people are empowered to actively participate and effect change, that outcomes are enhanced for all children and young people, and, in particular, that the physical health, mental health and wellbeing of children and young people is enhanced.

We, therefore, wish to address the following equality and human rights issues:

- Mental health issues for children and young people and the need for preventative initiatives and improved access to and outcomes from mental health services.
- Physical health issues for children and young people, particularly in relation to obesity.
- Limited provision of and access to services for children and young people, in particular education supports and youth and community services.
- Poverty experienced by children, young people and their families, in particular where there is inter-generational unemployment.

- Access to education and educational outcomes for all groups of children and young people.
- Access to accommodation and particular issues of homelessness for children and young people.
- Limited opportunities available to children and young people in relation to accessing training, and employment.

Democracy is about children and young people having a voice and being involved in decision-making. It involves securing accountability to children and young people from those in positions of leadership, collective decision-making, and delegation of responsibility. It includes children and young people having an opportunity to participate in civil society.

WCYPSC seeks to ensure that the voice of the full diversity of children and young people is heard, listened to and responded to in its own work and in the work of all other institutions in the County and that the necessary inclusive, educational and community approaches to ensure this are developed.

We, therefore, wish to address the following equality and human rights issues:

- The lack of opportunities for children and young people to have an effective input into decision-making and the need to create fora and processes to enable their input.
- Accountability to children and young people and the need to develop systems of accountability from key institutions.
- Disillusionment with political structures among young people and the need to create opportunities for children and young people to engage with political structures.
- The negative culture around making complaints and the need to create an environment where children, young people and their families feel able to speak up and raise issues about policies and procedures.

Autonomy is about children and young people being involved in making decisions for themselves. It involves freedom, independence and empowerment for children and young people. Autonomy is about children and young people having choices and having control in their interactions with their community and wider society.

WCYPSC seeks to ensure that children and young people have the capacity and support, including family supports, needed to be involved in decision-making for themselves, that children and young people have the structures to enable them to formulate their views and communicate them, and that real choices are available to children and young people, with the barriers that limit choice removed.

We, therefore, wish to address the following equality and human rights issues:

- The lack of supports, knowledge, confidence in oneself and confidence in institutional systems that diminish choice and control for children and young people.
- Barriers that limit real choices for children and young people include poverty and lack of financial resources, stereotyping, literacy, mental health and discrimination.

- The challenge to open up a range of real choices from institutions for children and young people and to provide the supports for children and young people and their families in making choices.

Using this Statement

This statement will serve as a set of guiding principles to bring an equality and human rights focus into the work of WCYPSC. It will underpin and shape the development and implementation of the WCYPSC plan and the measurement indicators established as part of this work.

It will be used as a focus for discussion within the organisations represented on the Committee.

This statement will be used to inform all stages of the planning and implementation process:

- The **consultation** for the plan: in deciding who is to be consulted, how consultations are organised and implemented, and what areas the consultation will focus on.
- **Data gathering and needs assessment:** in deciding what data are gathered and what data sources to use and in deciding methods and focus for the identification of needs.
- **Prioritising actions:** In deciding on the targeting of resources to be deployed and the prioritizing of actions for the plan.
- **Final drafting:** in assessing the final draft plan to use key moments to test the draft plan against the statement.
- The **development of indicators:** in establishing indicators to measure outputs from and impacts of the plan.
- **Implementation of the plan:** In managing and monitoring the implementation of the plan to use key moments to test progress made against the statement.