

**Uniting Voices For Children**

Kathleen Funchion TD  
Chair of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth Oireachtas Committee  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

22 June 2023

**RE: Refugee Children and Young People**

Dear Deputy Funchion,

The Children's Rights Alliance unites over 140 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children by making sure their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies, and services.

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth Oireachtas Committee in relation to refugee children and young people. Overall as of October 2022, Ireland accommodated over 50,000 people, compared with 7,000 at the same time the previous year. In April 2023, approximately one in every five applicants for international protection was a child, with 4,331 children being accommodated by the International Protection Accommodation Service. Alongside this there have been increases in those seeking protection due to the war in Ukraine. As of December 2022, 67,448 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Ireland, with over 22,932 being children and young people. This significant increase in the number of people seeking protection has led to external pressures and challenges in securing accommodation and has slowed the implementation of the White Paper to End Direct Provision. There are two key concerns we wish to bring to the Committee's attention:

**1. Direct Provision Payment**

Child Refugees were for the most part overlooked in cost-of-living measures in Budget 2023 with no increase to their Daily Expense Allowance (DEA) (€29.10) and the planned International Payment for children and young people, that would be at the same rate as child benefit, that was promised in the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision has not been introduced. It is critical that all families with children are treated equally regarding access to social welfare income. Children living in Direct Provision centres are at a high risk of consistent poverty although they are not counted in the official poverty statistics. Children and young people in Direct Provision have spoken about how a lack of income means they have few opportunities to take part in activities with their friends and peers after school. The financial cost of school trips or the need to take public transport after sport activities is a major barrier in terms of integrating into the community. As a first step towards addressing this inequality the DEA should be increased in line with QCI and benchmarked for any future increases.

Company Directors: Tom Maher (Chairperson), Orla Cunningham (Treasurer), Moninne Griffith (Company Secretary), Colm Bryson, Karen Hannify, Catherine Joyce, Nita Mishra and June Tinsley.

## 2. Temporary Emergency Accommodation

The use of emergency accommodation is a key area of concern. Due to limited capacity in existing accommodation centres, there were 24 Temporary Emergency Accommodation Centres, primarily hotels, in use in December 2021, with 129 children resident in five such Centres. As of November 2022 the number of temporary accommodation centres in use skyrocketed to 87. This is a 262.5 per cent increase in the use of emergency accommodation in one year. There are currently 1,414 children in temporary accommodation, over ten times the amount of the previous year, and the average length of stay in this accommodation for these children is 6.7 months.

Given that many of these sites operate on a commercial basis as hotels or guesthouses, not all staff have training on the needs of those seeking international protection. It is of particular concern that in April 2021, an investigation by the Ombudsman for Children's Office found that child safeguarding obligations are "less robust" in Temporary Emergency Accommodation Centres than in other International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS). The Children's Rights Alliance have heard reports that families have been moved from hotel accommodation to East Wall where they are being placed in a partitioned room, sleeping on floors with lighting controlled. While there are National Standards for Refugee Accommodation in place, they do not apply to Temporary Accommodation Centres and some centres not inspected by HIQA who can provide a level of oversight to ensure children are not placed in inappropriate accommodation.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with the Committee to discuss these issues in greater detail. I hope we can work together to ensure Ireland is one of the best places in the world to be a child.

Yours sincerely,



Tanya Ward  
Chief Executive