Making Children’s Rights Real with and for Young Carers

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What actions can we take to enable young carers to reach their goals and to thrive?
Ombudsman for Children’s Office (OCO)

Independent statutory organisation

Ombudsman for Children Act 2002

Two overall roles:
• promote children’s rights and welfare
• investigate complaints made by or for children

Niall Muldoon is Ombudsman for Children in Ireland since 2015

Ombudsman for Children appointed by President of Ireland and accountable to Ireland’s parliament

Find out more at www.oco.ie
OCO is a member of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children

ENOC

- Association of independent children’s rights institutions
- Membership open to institutions in Council of Europe Member States
- 43 institutions in 34 countries
- Supports the promotion and protection of children’s rights, as set out in the UNCRC
  - work on specific children’s rights issues (e.g. 2018 – mental health – young carers)
- Find out more at enoc.eu
OCO’s Work

Issues
health
education
housing
child protection
family and care
youth justice
online safety

Children and Young People
... seeking asylum
... in the care of the State
... with disabilities
... in detention
... experiencing homelessness
... with mental health difficulties
... in hospital

Developments
law
public policy
procedures
standards
inspection
services
practices
As a national children’s rights institution with a statutory mandate to promote children’s rights and welfare, our lens is children and their rights, with a particular focus on the actions of State actors.
Young Carers in Ireland

Census 2016
- 6108 young carers under 17
- 3,800 young carers under 15

Estimated
- 55,000+ young carers

... who are relatively **invisible** in law and public policy in Ireland

- **+ and -**
  - education
  - health & wellbeing
  - rest & recreation
  - social inclusion

all different (circumstances, needs, perspectives)
Rights of Young Carers

- Young carers under 18 are ‘children’
- Children under 18 have rights
- Children’s rights are set out under Irish, European and international law, including the UNCRC
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

- every child under 18
- inalienable, interdependent, indivisible
Responsibilities for making rights real

Under international human rights standards, **States** are the primary duty bearers.

- **Duty to Respect**: refrain from interfering directly or indirectly with children’s enjoyment of their rights.
- **Duty to Protect**: prevent third parties (e.g. companies) from interfering with children’s enjoyment of their rights.
- **Duty to Fulfil**: adopt the necessary measures to make children’s rights real in children’s lives.
Measures to make rights real

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

General Comment No.5 (2003)

General measures for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

- law
- national policy and strategy
- coordination
- resources (financial, human, technical)
- data
- awareness, education and training
- monitoring
- remedies and redress
In our role to promote children’s rights and welfare, we can:

- advise on developments in law and public policy
- encourage public organisations to work in ways that promote children’s rights
- collect and disseminate information
- raise awareness of children’s rights
- consult children and highlight their views and concerns
- undertake, promote or publish research
Questions

What do young carers think?
- experiences,
- perspectives,
- priorities?

What key actions need to be taken by the State and its actors?
- e.g. law, policy,
- coordination, data,
- resources, awareness raising?

What could OCO do?
- raise awareness,
- commission research,
- hear and highlight young carers’ perspectives?
Thank you