

PRESS RELEASE

Saving Childhood Ryan

Eight Organisations Fighting for Children Together

Dublin, 20 May 2010 – Eight organisations concerned with child protection have united to launch the Saving Childhood Ryan campaign on the first anniversary of the Ryan Report today. One year on Barnardos, CARI, the Children's Rights Alliance, the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, the ISPCC, the Irish Association of Young People in Care, One in Four and Rape Crisis Network Ireland have joined together to insist that Government keep the momentum going on key policy changes promised after the publication of the Report.

Fergus Finlay, Barnardos' CEO said: "The Ryan Report exposed a horrific history of systemic and colluded abuse of the most vulnerable children living in Ireland. The report lifted the lid on Ireland's shameful past where many people who could have done something to stop those who abused and harmed these vulnerable children did not act to prevent it. In the past year many promises have been made both to survivors of that abuse and children in Ireland, but have we delivered on them? To date progress has been slow and no lasting legislative or policy change has yet been achieved."

The organisations are calling for key legislation and policy change commitments to be implemented including placing the Children First child protection guidelines on a statutory footing; introducing legislation for the right of children's voices to be heard in judicial proceedings affecting them; the statutory provision for aftercare and numerous developments in the provision of services for children in the care of the State.

Jillian van Turnhout, Children's Rights Alliance' Chief Executive said: "As a nation, we have closed our eyes to injustices against the children who we should be cherishing; it is time for us to fight for childhood together. We all know what needs to be done to remedy the gaps in our child protection and care systems. Failures on the part of the State continue to damage childhoods that will leave a legacy of hurt and struggle well into adulthood. Important promises have been made to remedy these gaps, and the Government and the arms of the State now have a non-negotiable duty to live up to these promises. Children in Ireland deserve better. It is time that we as a society demanded better."

Ellen O'Malley-Dunlop, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre' CEO said: "It is imperative that adequate funding be given as promised to those organisations providing therapeutic services to survivors of institutional abuse. The scars of their past will take a long time to heal and having to endure waiting lists to access services is unacceptable."

Mr Finlay concluded: "We must ensure that the promises and hopes laid out in the Ryan Implementation Plan are made a reality. They must not get stuck in the bureaucracy of politics or left behind because of a lack of resources. It is time for us all to work together to save childhood for those children who need us to champion their cause. We must fight for an overhaul of the services provided to children across Ireland so that their childhoods will be better, their futures brighter. Some progress has been made, but more is needed. As a society we must prioritise our children, we must prioritise their childhood, and we must demand the changes that will fix our broken child protection system."

ENDS

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Notes to editor

SAVING CHILDHOOD RYAN CAMPAIGN: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expedite the legislation to place *Children First* on a statutory basis and widen its remit to include all organisations and individuals, including churches, sports bodies and volunteer groups;
- Ensure children's voices are heard in all matters affecting them. Develop the necessary legislative and policy framework to make statutory provision for the right of children's voices to be heard in judicial proceedings affecting them;
- Introduce and progress the National Vetting Bureau Bill, ensuring that the Bill provides adequately for the sharing of information between relevant agencies;
- Evaluate the National Children's Strategy 2000-2010 and begin the consultation process in preparation for the development of the next Strategy;
- Provide the necessary funding to those providing support services to survivors of institutional child abuse;
- Ensure all children in care have a dedicated social worker and care plan;
- Amend the Child Care Act 1991 via the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2009 to place a statutory obligation on the State to provide aftercare for all children who need it and develop a comprehensive national aftercare policy;
- Ensure that separated children moving into care placements are provided with adequate supports to meet their specific needs. Ensure these children have access to aftercare services;
- Publish the promised national review of current practice in relation to Section 5 of the Child Care Act 1991 to establish current practices and gaps in the system for children experiencing homelessness;
- Commence the Health Act 2007 to allow independent inspection of all children's residential centres and foster carers as a matter of urgency;
- Grant the Health Information and Quality Authority independence and robust powers to enforce compliance with child care regulations, through a range of mechanisms, including penalties, sanctions and fines.

CAMPAIGN INCLUDES ONLINE EMAIL PETITION FOR PEOPLE TO STAND UP AND
FIGHT FOR CHILDREN WITH US:

Visit www.savingchildhoodryan.ie