Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)

Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan

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Department of the Taoiseach
Department of Housing, Local Government and Hertitage

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Introduction

This document is a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) written by the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

It was written as part of the preparation of the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan, a new cross-government plan with three objectives: to better prevent children and families becoming homeless, to better support children and families living in emergency accommodation, and to more quickly exit children and families from emergency accommodation.

The purpose of this CRIA is to ensure that the preparation of the Action Plan was guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that sets out the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of children. It aims to ensure that every child is protected from harm and has opportunities to grow, learn and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The CRIA was written with the support of a draft toolkit developed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, as part of a wider pilot project. The toolkit provides a framework for policymakers to consider how their policy intervention might impact children's rights. Following the pilot process in 2026, the use of CRIAs will be expanded more widely across government and government agencies.

The Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage wish to acknowledge and thank the staff in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality for their support developing this document.

This CRIA has four sections. The first considers the measure being proposed and whether a CRIA is required. The second describes the evidence gathered and groups consulted during the development of the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan. The third assesses the impact that this measure might have on the rights of children and young people. And finally this CRIA describes how the impacts of the Action Plan will be measured, monitored and communicated to children and young people.

A: Screening

What measure is being proposed?

The Programme for Government 2025 commits to providing "emergency accommodation for everyone who needs it with special supports for children impacted by homelessness". In this context, the new national housing plan *Delivering Homes, Building Communities* undertakes to develop a Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan.

This Action Plan contributes to the Government's long-term ambition to end homelessness, and that where it is unavoidable, experiences of homelessness are rare, brief and non-recurring. The Action Plan will also seek to better protect the rights of children and families while they are living in emergency accommodation.

Overall, the Plan commits to 43 actions, with responsibility for implementation resting with multiple government departments and agencies. These actions seek to prevent children and families entering emergency accommodation; provide enhanced supports for children and families experiencing homelessness; and accelerate family exits from emergency accommodation.

The actions encompass a wide range of policy areas, including health, education, housing, nutrition, child protection, youth services, arts, sports and transport.

Does the measure have the potential to impact the rights of the child, and/or young people?

Yes. The Plan explicitly seeks to better protect children's rights, including in housing, health, education, child protection, and play and recreation.

Based on the findings of this screening process, is a full CRIA indicated?

Yes. Children's Rights Impact Assessments are often used to identify, and mitigate, instances where new initiatives might otherwise detrimentally impact the rights of children. The central motivation of the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan, however, is to improve the lives of vulnerable children.

As such, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of the Taoiseach consider this CRIA an opportunity to consider the full range of rights listed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure that the Action Plan is sufficiently guided by it.

B: Evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement

What evidence is being/will be used to inform this assessment?

The development of this Action Plan drew on four main sources: evidence from the general public gathered through an open consultation; evidence from families and children with experience of homelessness; evidence from policy and practice professionals; and evidence from an academic and policy literature.

During a three-week public consultation, the Government requested submissions on "additional measures that can be taken to address child and family homelessness". 60 submissions were received from members of the public, NGOs, and government departments and agencies.

Children and families with experience of homelessness also gave their ideas on how to address family homelessness. This was through both a consultation with young people moderated by an NGO, and also an in-person consultation day in March 2026, where young people and parents with experience of homelessness attended and participated. The in-person consultation day was also attended by NGOs and public sector organisations who provide services for homeless families.

Finally, a Rapid Evidence Review was conducted during the development of the Action Plan. This evidence review examined best practice in Ireland and internationally for prevention, protection and progression in relation to family homelessness.

A written summary of the consultation process and the Rapid Evidence Review are published separately.

What stakeholder groups are being/will be engaged in developing/reviewing the measure?

Stakeholder groups engaged to develop this measure include:

- The general public
- Policy and practice professionals
- Academics and researchers
- Children and families with experience of homelessness

In addition to wider consultations, a Public Sector Delivery Group was established to advise and support the development of the Action Plan. Membership of the Public Sector Delivery Group included:

- Department of the Taoiseach (Chair)
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Children, Disability and Equality
- Department of Health
- Department of Education
- Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
- Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration
- Department of Social Protection
- Local Government Management Agency
- Health Service Executive
- Tusla – Child and Family Agency
- Housing Agency
- Dublin Region Homeless Executive

What new or existing evidence on children's and/or young people's views is being/will be considered in the development of the measure?

In developing this Action Plan, officials gathered existing evidence on children's own views on their experience of homelessness, particularly with respect to the quality of emergency accommodation. One example is *No Place Like Home*, a 2019 report from the Ombudsman for Children's Office that captures the voices of children living in emergency accommodation.

In addition, officials also gathered new evidence on children's views. As part of the consultation process, three age groups of children and young people gave their views on what they would like to be included in the Action Plan. These consultations were moderated by Focus Ireland. In addition, Focus Ireland's Youth Panel also attended an in-person consultation day in March 2026, where they provided policy ideas for inclusion in the Action Plan. These children were either currently living in emergency accommodation, or had previously lived in emergency accommodation. Parents with experience of homelessness also attended the consultation event, and offered their perspective on their children's experiences.

The views and experiences of these children informed the development of this Action Plan.

C: Assessment of impact and mitigation

Based on the evidence gathered and/or direct engagement with children and/or young people/other stakeholder groups, what impact could the measure have on the rights of the child, and/or on young people?

The actions contained within the Action Plan have the potential to better realise the rights enshrined within the UNCRC. Principally this includes Article 27, the right to an adequate standard of living and consequently a safe place to live. But it encompasses many other rights too, such as the best interests of the child; prevention from discrimination; prevention from harm; the right to rest, play and culture; and access to education and healthcare.

The Plan acknowledges that emergency accommodation is not an appropriate setting for children and families to live for long periods of time. Children themselves made this point during the consultation process. In addition, academic and policy research considered in the development of this Plan is clear that exposure to homelessness in childhood can have detrimental consequences across a wide range of outcomes, including in health, education and well-being.

Consequently, the Plan includes a range of actions aimed at preventing children and families entering emergency accommodation, as well as exiting them from it as quickly as possible. These include: tenancy support services, domestic violence guidance, exploring the feasibility of a protocol to identify at-risk families as early as possible, larger social homes, and tailored exit pathways.

The Plan also acknowledges the rights of children while they are living in emergency accommodation. It therefore additionally contains actions aimed at mitigating the detrimental effects of homelessness. These actions particularly address issues raised by children and young people themselves.

For example, young people said that the needs of children and families are not always well understood in emergency accommodation, and that experiences of rudeness or inappropriate behaviour—particularly affecting families from minority backgrounds or those who have experienced trauma—should be addressed through better staff training. Under the Action Plan, all staff providing services to children will be trained in equality, cultural sensitivity and trauma-informed care. Moreover, the family-specific minimum standards for emergency accommodation will be strengthened and compliance with them improved.

Young people repeatedly emphasised the importance of Child Support Workers for improving the experience of emergency accommodation, both for themselves and their families. This

Action Plan enables Family Resource Centres to provide enhanced support to children and families living in emergency accommodation, or at risk of homelessness.

Children also expressed how important it is to listen to children themselves. The Plan commits to continued engagement with children and young people with lived experience of homelessness, including seeking their views on how the Plan is working and how it can be improved over time.

Other commitments in the Action Plan include: improved cooking facilities and nutritional guidelines in emergency accommodation; improved access to recreational opportunities; support with the transport costs of school attendance; appropriate prioritisation for public health nurse checks; and child protection guidelines for children living in emergency accommodation. All of these measures are aimed at better realising the rights contained in the UNCRC.

In its governance section, the Action Plan describes that success will be measured not only in terms of the implementation of actions, but through measuring their effects on outcomes for children and families.

Progress in these areas would mean more children living in secure, permanent homes, thus better realising Article 27 of the UNCRC, which recognises the right of every child to a standard of living “adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.”

Where potential negative impacts have been identified, have mitigation actions been identified to address these? Based on the evidence/information gathered as part of this CRIA process, what changes, if any, will be made to the measure proposed?

During the development of the Action Plan, a series of risks of were identified. Various measures were put in place to mitigate these risks:

Risk	Mitigation
Not securing sufficient cross-government buy-in	A Public Sector Delivery Group, with representatives from all relevant government departments and agencies, contributed to the development of the Action Plan. Similarly, a cross-government Delivery Steering Group will oversee the Plan's implementation.
The Action Plan does not respond to the priorities and needs of children	During the development of the Action Plan, officials sought the input of young people on how experiences of living in emergency accommodation could be improved.
The implementation of the Action is slow, and does not respond to the urgency of child and family homelessness	The Plan commits to progress all actions immediately and simultaneously. Progress will be reviewed at least quarterly by the Delivery Steering Group, and adjustments or new actions introduced where appropriate.
Actions designed to improve the quality of emergency accommodation will lead to an insufficient focus on prevention	The Action Plan is strongly connected the Prevention Framework and reaffirms that where unavoidable, homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring. As stated in the Action Plan's introduction: "Nothing in this Plan is intended to imply that homelessness is acceptable, but where children and families experience homelessness, they should be able to access accommodation and supports which respond to the best interests of the child and their longer-term well-being.

D: Post-CRIA actions

How will the impact that the measure could have on the rights of the child and/or on young people be communicated to children and/or young people?

In the first instance, the Action Plan itself includes child-friendly text and the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage has written directly to the young people who contributed to the development of the Plan. Then, following the publication of the Plan, those children and young people will be briefed by officials.

After, 12 months, the Government will host a consultation event where children and young people with experience of homelessness will have the opportunity to give feedback on the impact of the Action Plan and suggest further ideas.

How will the impact of the measure on the rights of the child and/or on young people be monitored and reviewed after it has commenced/been introduced?

Progress on implementing the actions in the Action Plan will be monitored by a Delivery Steering Group (DSG), a subgroup of the National Homeless Action Committee, which will meet at least quarterly. The DSG will comprise representatives from key government departments and State bodies as well as representatives from the NGO sector. The DSG will also report to the Cabinet Committee on Children and Education.

After one year, the DSG will host a public consultation to share updates and emerging learnings with wider stakeholders, including children and young people. The DSG will then submit a Delivery and Learning Report to NHAC and to Government in order to inform future decision making and prioritisation.

Conclusion

This CRIA has described how the preparation of the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan was guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The Action Plan acknowledges that homelessness can and does affect children across many areas of their lives. It consequently outlines a response that brings together a wide range of services and supports across Government. This CRIA, then, has served as an opportunity to ensure that the Action Plan is guided by the full range of children's rights. This includes the right to an adequate standard of living, as well as the right to healthcare, education, protection from harm, and rest, play and culture. The engagement with children and young people described in this document was similarly guided by the right of children to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

This CRIA was conducted as part of a wider Department of Children, Disability and Equality pilot examining how CRIAs can be embedded into the policy development process across Government. The approach taken in this document suggests that the process of conducting a CRIA can be a valuable exercise where children and their rights are the central concern of a proposed policy intervention, and also where that policy intervention involves a wide range of children's rights.