



National Youth Council of Ireland

Comhairle Náisiúnta na nÓg

MEDIA RELEASE:

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Youth Council presents on Children First Heads of Bill to Oireachtas Committee

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) was invited to present to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children today to respond to the Heads of the Children First Bill published by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald.

NYCI has broadly welcomed the publication of the Heads of Bill which will place the Children First guidelines on child protection and welfare on a statutory footing for the first time.

Mary Cunningham, Director of NYCI, raised a number of issues about the implications of the Bill, in particular for those who work in the youth work sector, including:

- The importance of clarity around reporting thresholds
- Provision for volunteers and affiliated groups or regionally structured organisations
- Linking of forthcoming Garda vetting legislation

Ms Cunningham, said:

“The publication of this Bill is an important step forward for those working to place the safety of young people at the heart of our society. And, importantly, it is a step for which the youth work sector is ready as it already operates in accordance with Children First guidelines ensuring training, policies and procedures which create a safe environment for children and young people are in place.”

“However, it is vital that detailed reporting guidance is communicated to the youth sector from the HSE, as promised, in order to minimize the risk of over-reporting and the flooding of an already over- stretched system,” continued Ms Cunningham.

“Moreover, while the youth work sector welcomes the opportunity to respond to this Heads of Bill, it is only one of a number of steps needed to secure the safety and well-being of children and young people in our society. The forthcoming Garda vetting legislation and the promised referendum on children's rights will further demonstrate the value we place on children and young people in Ireland,” concluded Ms Cunningham.

ENDS

For further information, please contact **Daniel Meister, Communications Officer at NYCI** on 087 781 4903 or 01 425 5955 or email communications@nyci.ie

Notes to Editors:

National Youth Council of Ireland

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is a membership-led umbrella organisation that represents and supports the interests of voluntary youth organisations and uses its collective experience to act on issues that impact on young people.

NYCI Child Protection Programme

The NYCI Child Protection Programme works with youth work organisations and others in assessing and addressing the child protection needs of the youth work sector.

The Child Protection Programme (formerly known as the Child Protection Unit) was established in late 2004 as part of the implementation of the National Youth Work Development Plan.

Full text of presentation available here:

NYCI Presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children: Children First Heads of Bill

<http://www.youth.ie/nyci/Children-First-Heads-Bill-NYCI-Presentation-Joint-Oireachtas-Committee-Health-and-Children>