

Blog Carnival to Mark the Irish Refugee Council's 6 Month Review of the Independent Advocacy Pilot



IAP

Independent Advocacy Pilot

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Irish Refugee Council



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Identifying and Filling Gaps: Supporting Separated Children

SAMANTHA ARNOLD, CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PERSONS' OFFICER AT THE IRISH REFUGEE COUNCIL and is organiser of today's [blog carnival](#), which forms part of *Human Rights in Ireland's blog contributions to [Human Rights Week 2012](#)*.

There have been several calls for the introduction of an independent system for guardianship in Ireland at the international, European Union and domestic levels. These have included: the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#); [The UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#); [The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#); [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe](#); [European Network of Ombudspersons for Children](#); [The European Commission](#); and the [National Children's Strategy in Ireland](#). In addition, the [Irish Refugee Council](#), working together with other children's rights organisations, has long campaigned for independent guardianship for separated children.

Currently under Section 4 & 5 of the Child Care Act 1991, under which separated children are taken into care by the HSE, there is no provision for legal guardianship. Under Section 4 of the Act, the parent or former legal guardian of the separated child retains guardianship (rights) of the child in the country of origin. Section 5 of the Act, is used in cases of homelessness; again there is no provision for a legal guardian. The Child Care Act was, however, amended in 2011. Under Section 17 of that Act a legal guardian is defined as a representative appointed through the District Courts. When the HSE utilise Sections 4 & 5 of the Child Care Act 1991 and do not provide a legal guardian for separated children through the district court (as is currently the case for most separated children), the HSE may be in breach of their obligations under the Act as amended. Moreover, social workers acting as legal guardian may run afoul of the law as they have never been given authority to be the legal guardian through the district courts.

Practically speaking, most separated children that the Irish Refugee Council supports have no *legal* guardian looking after their best interests in relation to their general care and immigration needs. It may thus be asserted that in line with current practise, not only is the care of separated children not equitable, but the lack of legal guardianship and appropriate care assessments means separated children are not receiving the most basic care and support that is required by law.

In February 2011, the Irish Refugee Council launched the [Irish National Report](#) as part of [Closing a Protection Gap](#), a project undertaken by 8 European countries looking at the guardianship needs of separated children in Europe. The main aim of the project was to develop [core standards](#) of practice

for guardians. To achieve this, each partner country interviewed at least 10 separated children and at least 10 guardians to establish current practice in their jurisdictions. The project also aimed to get a sense of what the young people and the guardians would have liked to have seen as common practice in an ideal world.

In Ireland, this process involved interviewing 29 young people and 16 practitioners. Those working for the Health Service Executive (HSE) were interviewed as the 'guardians' of separated children in Ireland. In Interviewing both the HSE and the young people the following were established as building blocks to good guardianship:

The young people wanted: information about the asylum process; access to education; someone to help them deal with their fear of ageing out of the care system; consistency and fewer people in their lives; to feel their representative or guardian felt responsible for them and cared about them; and to feel they could trust their representative and have a relationship with them.

The social workers and project workers expressed that they needed more time, resources and support (including legal) to be more effective. Moreover, they felt a desire to do more and feelings of helplessness in relation to their limits within the HSE. The social workers and project workers also stressed the importance of trust and relationship building, but noted that time, resources and their professional limitations may bar them from doing this effectively.

All separated children deserve and need one designated and independent person who is cognizable as their legal guardian- and their advocate. In Ireland, the social worker is not independent of the State and runs into considerable difficulties when they need to advocate against the State in the best interest of the child. Moreover, the Irish Refugee Council in 'Closing a Protection Gap' found that some social workers saw themselves as case managers. However, separated children who are vulnerable to trafficking, need protection from traffickers, or who are vulnerable to re-trafficking need *more* support and need qualified and dedicated advocates to ensure their safety, look after their well-being and to ensure all other aspects of the child's psychosocial needs are being met.

It is for these two reasons that the Irish Refugee Council has undertaken the [Independent Advocacy Pilot](#) as one of our core work streams in relation to children. Young people stated that they needed more than what they were getting from their social workers or project workers, including a continuation past the age of 18. The advocates are meant to fill this space and not take on any of the more official duties of the allocated social worker or project worker. Additionally, this project

hopes to collect evidence to support the need to implement the [Core Standards](#) and also to ensure that all children have an allocated guardian as provided for by the Child Care Amendment Act 2011.

This project has reached its first phase in building an evidence base to push for change and also in supporting separated children and aged-out minors engaged with the asylum process in Ireland. The [midterm review](#) of the pilot reflects on the first 6 months of the project and identifies key findings, collates demographic information and notes the ways in which advocates and young people are spending their time. For the midterm review, we also interviewed 6 of the advocates to get a sense of what they feel their role as an advocate is and also how they feel the children are benefiting, or not.

In Waterford, the advocates viewed themselves as either a friend/mentor and someone available outside of their formal support networks or 'outside their situation'. They viewed their primary responsibility as staying in contact, or being consistent with week-to-week visits or phone calls. One respondent also identified being able to provide information so the young people know their options as a primary responsibility. One respondent stated that you are 'there to talk' and that the young people 'don't realise they are getting support and being looked after'. This advocate made it clear that there was a monitoring element involved in being an advocate. Mainly, the advocates felt the young people were benefiting purely by having someone they can contact and count on as most aged-out minors had lost their main reliable adult.

Preliminary observations: young people have more information about their current circumstances; in some cases their care staff are better supported in being able to advocate for the young people leaving their care; relationships are being cultivated between the advocate and the young person; advocates feel enriched and are learning more about the situation of young asylum seekers; new information is being gathered about the on-the-ground realities of the asylum/care nexus; young people are enthusiastic about the pilot; young people feel more supported approaching a transition to a new county as a result of dispersal; and young people feel they have someone they can turn to.

Unfortunately, young people are getting referred after they are already facing dispersal, thus not giving the advocate time to prep the young person and talk about their fears – nor are they able to assist the young person in advocating for a better dispersal placement. It is hoped that in the future, young people will be referred at an early point in the process. This will require more active engagement with the HSE and other services involved at the early stages such as the CDVEC. This is

the main area to work to improve in the next phase of the Pilot. At the end of the Pilot, the IRC will have a learning event where the concerns and findings of the pilot will be explored in more detail.

Today's event surrounds the web-launch of the [6 Month Review](#) of the Independent Advocacy Pilot and also gives our advocates, young people, academics and practitioners the opportunity to blog on issues related to separated children seeking asylum. You may also [donate](#) to the project and you will receive an electronic copy of [The Mariannes'](#) single '[Home](#)' written specifically for our project by the band whose lead singer is one of our advocates! Enjoy!

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/identifying-and-filling-gaps-supporting-separated-children/>

Foster care for separated children in Ireland: A positive policy development

DR MUIREANN NÍ RAGHALLAIGH, LECTURER IN SOCIAL WORK AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN.

Over the past ten years or so, when we have heard about separated children, it has generally been in rather negative contexts: reports of inadequate services, of teenagers being accommodated in unsupervised hostels, of young people disappearing from the 'care' system, of concerns about trafficking and of deportations of 'aged-out' minors. Likewise, when the foster care system is discussed in the public sphere, the discussions are often quite negative. Indeed, very recently, foster carers got particularly bad press during the Children's Rights Referendum.

It is only within the last two years, that the two 'topics' – separated children and foster carers – have really come together in any significant way. Until then very few separated children lived in foster care. The majority were cared for in unregulated hostels that were not staffed by professionals. This situation received ongoing criticism from numerous organisations, including the Irish Refugee Council. Over a number of years the HSE began closing hostels and moving separated children into family placements – foster care and supported lodgings. (Supported lodgings are a less intensive form of foster care designed for children aged 15 and over.). This change in policy was welcomed by a multitude of service providers and was seen as allowing separated children to be provided with care that equates with their Irish counterparts.

Over the last year, I undertook research on separated children in foster care/supported lodgings and had the privilege of being able to interview foster/supported lodgings carers, separated children and stakeholders. Having been involved in this field in various capacities for over a decade, it was heartening to learn that the new system, while not perfect, is working well for many separated children and for their carers.

Indeed, the interviews with the foster carers shed light on a group of individuals who do extremely important work – both with separated children and with other children and young people – work that is largely hidden and unnoticed by the public. These carers showed a commitment to this client

group that needs to be recognised and celebrated. Perhaps doing so might encourage others to follow suit and consider offering a home to a separated young person in Ireland.

Who, then, are these foster / supported lodgings carers? Those whom I met came from various ethnic, religious and social backgrounds. Some were white-Irish, others came from ethnic minority backgrounds, having themselves migrated to Ireland. Some were single and parenting/caring alone, while others were caring as couples. Some had children of their own, others did not. Some were employed in full time jobs outside the home, others were not. Some were Catholic, some were members of other religions and some had no religious affiliations. Some lived in working class areas, others in opulent, leafy suburbs; some were in cities, while others were in very rural locations. In short, they, like separated children, were characterised by their diversity.

All showed a commitment to the children for whom they cared. There was evidence that carers cared for the young people and sought to act in their best interests. They wanted to make the journey of these young people slightly easier. One carer stated:

If we can give them a positive experience for the time that they're in our house, maybe we might give them something that they can draw on as they go out into the world.

The carers showed an awareness of the many challenges that the separated young people faced. They recognised that the young people missed family members, that they wanted to make friends in Ireland and that they found the asylum process and its associated uncertainty very stressful. The carers sought to look after the young people in a way that recognised these challenges. For example, in general, the carers respected the young people's right to privacy. They recognised that many separated children needed space to deal with what they had been through and that trusting relationships could not be expected to develop overnight. While it was challenging at times, there was an acceptance that many young people will remain reticent or secretive about the past. One carer stated:

They don't have the confidence so it is important to give them the space, don't intrude too much. Relationship building takes time and it is important as well to, to know that they are different; everybody has their own way of seeing things

As is also evident from this quotation, the carers embraced diversity and attempted to respond positively to the cultural differences that they faced in caring for separated children. Amongst other things, young people spoke of carers who cooked food from their countries of origin, who spoke to

them about their culture, who brought them to events related to their countries and who learnt words from their native language. One young person stated:

What I like from my last foster mother, she always asked me what kind of food I eat, what kind of music I like and she sometimes takes me to a place where, where there is a cultural programme from my country. She would take me there, because I always miss something about my own culture.

Caring for adolescents who are of a different culture is, of course, not without its challenges. At times, carers and young people encountered cross cultural challenges, related to various issues, including language, communication style, food and cultural norms. One young person talked about how, when he arrived in Ireland first, his way of communicating could be interpreted as rude:

I came new, I didn't even say 'thank you'; I didn't even say 'please'. You know? Because I'm not used to it. So they can have the misunderstanding. Maybe they might think you are rude or something like that, but you are not.

While most of the carers had received training and support in relation to cultural diversity issues, it was evident there is a need for on-going and in-depth training to be provided so that the religious, ethnic and cultural needs and rights of separated children can be adequately addressed. Separated children have a right to preserve their identity and indeed the meeting of this right is of fundamental importance to their future well-being.

Some of the young people who participated were cared for by carers of their own cultural, religious or ethnic background. In discussing the positive aspects of such care, the young people spoke of the continuity that these placements provided. For example, these young people could speak their own language on a daily basis, they could swap stories about their countries of origin, they could ask questions about home and they had easy access to native food and to other elements of their culture. Also, such carers often had personal experience of migration, resulting in an increased capacity to understand what the young people were going through. One of the social workers stated the following:

There's so much change for them when they come here. They've lost their families and their culture, their friends, their food, the smells, their clothing, everything. The weather is different. And if they can have some kind of similarities that they can draw on – a language, it might be, or a food or something. Sometimes it's nice for them to have that connection with their culture.

Yet, social workers spoke of the struggle to recruit carers, particularly carers from ethnic and religious minority communities. For example, it was evident that there was a lack of Muslim carers. A coordinated approach to recruiting a more diverse pool of carers needs to be made, with the public and private agencies working together so that ethnic and religious minority children in the care of the state – whether separated children or not – can be provided with placements from within their own communities, if this is deemed in their best interests.

For many of the young people who participated in this study, what they wanted was quite simple. They wanted carers who cared about them. Specifically, they wanted carers to treat them like they would their own children, while simultaneously recognising that the young people often had parents or other family members who lived elsewhere. Again and again, young people in this research and in other research have pointed to this as a key ingredient that they value in foster care. For example, one girl in this study stated:

My foster mother, she's so kind, she's so caring, loving. She's like my mum, you know... You can talk to her, you can just say anything you like, that's what makes me like feel like I'm welcomed... They treat you just like I am like family.

What I have written here paints a very positive picture, a picture that is rarely seen in relation to separated children. Things are of course, not perfect. There was evidence that some placements had broken down, that some separated children had been moved from hostels in Dublin (where they had lived for several years) to foster placements that were far away from Dublin. There was evidence also of a shortage of foster carers, resulting in challenges when matching young people with families. While many of the young people were very settled in their placements, for others this was not the case. The move to foster care is a very significant development, which is a large step towards recognising both the rights and the needs of this group of young people. However, caution must be exercised in seeing it as some kind of panacea. Fundamentally, each separated child has the right to be treated as an individual. As such, policy makers and practitioners must ensure that this right is always to the forefront in decision making and that the voice of each separated young person is heard and taken into account when decisions are being made about care arrangements. Foster care may not be in the best interests of every separated child. This is why, at times, other forms of care such as long-term residential care are used.

On a final note, the issue of after care for separated children is of particular concern. At 18, most separated young people move to the 'direct provision' system, a system that has been highly criticised in numerous reports, including, most recently, the Irish Refugee Council's report [State](#)

Sanctioned Child Poverty and Exclusion. Research participants expressed concern about the impact of direct provision on the social well-being and psychological health of separated young people. There is a real risk that the benefits that separated children glean from foster care could become undone because of the move to direct provision. This is an extremely important issue which lies at the intersection of migration policy and child protection policy. It needs to be given considerable thought and attention if the success of foster care for separated children is to prove beneficial in the long run.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/foster-care-for-separated-children-in-ireland-a-positive-policy-development/>

The Voice of the Child: Experiences in the Education Sector and the Advocacy Pilot

LISA LOUGHREY, SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANT & ADVOCATE FOR THE INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY PILOT

Having worked with young people in the education sector for the past decade, there is one resounding truth that I have come to understand. This truth is, that each young person, both as a result of, and regardless of, their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, economic status and cultural practises, is unique. Every child develops within a unique set of individual circumstances, and it is this set of circumstances which contributes to the physical, emotional and social development of each person. Throughout childhood and adolescence, the foundations and building blocks to what will hopefully result in healthy and happy adults are being laid. As a professional, who works with young people on a daily basis, I often question what my own role is in supporting these very foundations on which young people so dearly depend.

The list of professionals employed to cater for and support the needs of young people in contemporary Irish society is indeed an extensive one: education staff, counsellors, youth workers, play/drama/speech and language therapists, etc. Each professional has a different role to play in the life of a young person. However, it is important not to let the definition of that role obscure the requirement to support the holistic needs of young people. Limiting focus to the needs relevant to one's professional background, while necessary, often causes actors to lose sight of the bigger picture – or the whole picture. Furthermore, it can also result in services becoming fragmented, which can ultimately lead to the quality of each service becoming less effective.

This tendency on the part of the professional to limit their work to that which falls within the often narrow scope of their own role when working with young people, in my experience, often causes the professional to lose sight of what should be paramount to meeting and supporting the needs of vulnerable young people. Children and young people have a voice, these voices need to be heard and more importantly listened to. Having learned this lesson over time, and having learnt to focus on this philosophy, I have come to realise that simply listening to a young person in need can sometimes be enough to lighten the burdens they are carrying. Furthermore, it is the most useful way to establish the best course of action to support the young person at that time.

I wanted to become an [advocate on this programme](#), because I believe that youth advocacy should encompass a human rights approach to working with children and young people. Advocacy can act as a powerful means of supporting children across a broad spectrum of areas, including health, education and asylum law. The goal of advocacy is first and foremost to empower young people. It also seeks to support the young person through the decision making processes that affects their everyday lives. Rather than focusing on the definition of my own role, or indeed feeling inhibited by my role, acting as an advocate has provided me the opportunity to build a rapport with young asylum seekers. It has also afforded me the opportunity to build a relationship with a young person outside of any institution or establishment, to learn about their unique history, their unique story. Through listening to the young person, I was given the chance to walk in their shoes. This process has allowed me to gain insight into the feelings, wants and needs of vulnerable young people at a time in their lives when they are effectively at the mercy of the professionals with whom they are in contact.

Children and young people are a group who are overlooked when it comes to voicing their own opinions. Advocacy has the potential to develop a young person's sense of self-worth, boost their own esteem and to teach them about responsibility. It can serve to interpret the young person's feelings wants and needs in legal contexts, and give them an independent voice in matters that may affect them both in personal and legal contexts.

Due to the demanding nature of many professional roles in children and youth affairs, it is easy to forget how vital it is to listen to young people, and to encourage them to express their needs. Through offering information and support, and by building a relationship based on mutual respect and not through exercising professional authority, young people can learn to meet the demands of the world they live in and to tackle their difficulties independently.

My experience with the independent advocacy pilot has reinforced my belief that really listening to the needs of a young person is the most effective way to establish how one can best support their needs. More importantly, it also enables the young person to realise how they can best help themselves. I believe giving young people a voice and working with building a holistic support system in mind, gives the service provider and the advocate the best chance in securing durable solutions. Advocacy gives the young person the opportunity to share the experiences they have had with other service providers and talk about their needs so that the advocate can build a more holistic picture of the child's circumstances and work to support them in whatever way they can.

Through this project, I have had the privilege of working with one of the most humble, resilient and gracious young men I feel I will ever have the pleasure of knowing. A young person who has experienced more hardship as a child than most people I know will encounter in a lifetime. A young person who is deserving of far more than the state at present is willing to offer. Perhaps his involvement with the project will provide him with the outlet he requires to let his voice be heard, to receive the support he needs and to tell his own unique story.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/the-voice-of-the-child-experiences-in-the-education-sector-and-the-advocacy-pilot/>

Aged-out minors in Ireland- Lessons learned from past mistakes?

BRIAN COLLINS, BL & ADVOCATE FOR THE INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY PILOT

For those unfamiliar with the asylum process in Ireland, the term “separated children” (or unaccompanied minor) might seem a little confusing. “Separated from what?” one might ask.

Children and young people who flee from their country of origin to Ireland in search of international protection face a variety of types of separation. They are physically separated from their parents (or legal guardians), families, communities and home countries. On arrival to Ireland they may face separation of another kind; as they find it more difficult to access education and the requisite supports which very vulnerable young people need. They also face “separation” from Irish society as the current system facilitates, if not encourages, enforced poverty and social exclusion. The problems of children in the Direct Provision (DP) have been well documented and rehearsed, most recently in Samantha Arnold’s report on “[State Sanctioned Poverty and Exclusion](#)”. Separated children and *aged-out* minors also face particular difficulties.

Through my role as an Advocate, working with two young people, I have seen first-hand the difficulties which unaccompanied minors face as they try to navigate a system which is not child friendly.

Both of the young people I am working with on this project have recently become *aged-out* minors: that is they arrived to Ireland as separated children and entered the asylum process, but have still not received a decision on their legal status by their 18th birthday.

When they reach their 18th birthday, separated children in the asylum process are forced to move from a residential care centre or foster care arrangement to an adult DP centre. The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) oversees the DP system in Ireland, which provides accommodation for asylum seekers. The name of this agency is misleading as it has [no responsibility for integration](#) and indeed it could be said that the current system does little or nothing to encourage it.

The practical result of this arrangement for aged-out minors is that extremely vulnerable young people go from a relatively supportive and nurturing care situation to the DP system within a very

short space of time. At their residential care centre, they share accommodation with other young people, and have regular contact with a social worker or other staff from the Health Service Executive (HSE). They are also facilitated in accessing the social supports and facilities they need. Their meal times and routine can have a certain amount of flexibility, and these young people can have some semblance of a “normal” life.

When they move to DP, aged out minors may still have contact with their social or after care worker, but they now find themselves in a very rigid system. These young people are often forced to share rooms with adult strangers. This could be damaging for the young people involved, and potentially abusive. In relation to minors in DP, Geoffrey Shannon, Special Rapporteur on Child Protection has commented in his [fifth report](#) to the Oireachtas (2011) that

given the wide variation amongst residents in such centres, with single parents sometimes required to share with strangers and families with teenage children of opposite gender sharing one room, and in the absence of appropriate supervision and support, there is a real risk of child abuse.

For these aged-out minors, the relative stability and comfort of a residential care situation is swiftly replaced with the jarring reality of a DP hostel. All of this occurs without parental support or guidance, without certainty as to their long term legal status, and in a different cultural environment. All the while, these young people are forced to fend for themselves on the entirely inadequate sum of €19.10 per week. [Shannon](#) comments that the situation of those in Direct Provision has been considered to be institutionalised poverty.

Both of the young people I have been assisting through this project are still attending school. They are bright, motivated and hardworking young people and will be sitting their Leaving Certificate exams in the next year or so. However, they are also vulnerable. They have fled persecution in their country of origin and now find themselves in a strange country, waiting for years for a decision on their legal status. It is undoubtedly true that they need as much if not more support than others in their class to reach their full potential.

The reality is that the DP hostel system is wholly unsuitable and indeed detrimental to these young people’s needs, and the jump from residential care to a hostel can be stark and traumatic. Aged-out minors leave their friends and support structure in residential care and move to an unfamiliar, unpleasant and unsupportive environment.

One of the young people I have been working with, who is based outside of Dublin, has described her difficulty in completing her homework in circumstances where one of the women she shared a room with stayed up late at night listening to music and making telephone calls.

Aside from personality differences, this problem was being compounded by the fact that this woman is almost twice the age of the young person and from a different cultural background. This young person found it impossible to complete her homework satisfactorily and indeed it was difficult to get a good night's sleep to enable her to participate fully in school the next day. After school homework projects are available on a limited basis for those young persons living in Dublin, but these may not be available at all for those placed outside of Dublin.

From my work as an Advocate I have observed that aged-out minors can face a variety of difficulties, from access to schools, access to back to school allowance and access to facilities. The rigid nature of the meal times at his DP centre meant that one of the young people I was assisting through the advocacy project was forced to forego evening meals so that he could attend sports practice, which was a vital social outlet for him. These inflexible practices need to be challenged. They impact on young people's physical and mental well-being and ultimately mean that these young people may struggle to have their rights vindicated in a meaningful way.

The Independent Advocacy project is an invaluable tool to enable separated children to have their voices heard. We need to hear these voices. We have a dismal record of child protection in Ireland, and it is essential that we are alive to these issues, particularly in the wake of the Ryan Report. The advocacy pilot provides support for these young people and in the case of the young people I am working with, I can say that it was at a crucial time, as they aged-out and moved from care to Direct Provision.

At a basic level the Advocacy Pilot enables these young people to talk about the "small things" too and participate in fun social activities whether it's a bowling excursion or a trip to the cinema. This goes at least some way to alleviating the social exclusion which children in the asylum process can face. The Pilot allows these extremely vulnerable young people to have another person to turn to should they need to be listened to or if they need help or assistance in getting through the frustrating and protracted asylum process.

If we allow the current system to continue unchallenged, we travel a dangerous path from ignorance, to apathy, to facilitation, to neglect. We need to learn lessons from past mistakes, and we need to challenge our elected representatives to do more to vindicate the rights of young people in the asylum process.

Checks and balances are essential in the provision of care for vulnerable children and young people, particularly where these young people have come to our shores seeking international protection. The Independent Advocacy Pilot is not only a very good initiative for the young persons involved, but also a very timely and necessary one, and I am glad to be part of it.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/aged-out-minors-in-ireland-lessons-learned-from-past-mistakes/>

Aged Out Minors in Ireland: Who in the world loses everything when they turn 18? Separated children in Ireland

JENNA CAINS, OUTREACH WORKER WITH THE INTEGRATION AND SUPPORT UNIT OF THE EDMOND RICE CENTRE

The term Aged-Out Minor (AOM) is used to describe a separated child who has turned 18 years old and is now an adult in the eyes of the State. There is no family celebration for these young people though. Upon turning 18 a Separated child's life changes dramatically.. They are moved out of Dublin to a new city, losing their circle of friends and supports; they change school; they move from a residential setting or even a foster home to a mixed-sex adult hostel; they lose their social worker and any other support service they were engaged with in Dublin. In the past, separated children were housed in single-sex hostels and some of the AOMs in Waterford would have come from these types of minor accommodation. In 2010, the Health Service Executive (HSE) began to phase these hostels out. Separated children living in these hostels were a tight-knit community. A lot of the young people were known to support each other. They were involved with the same volunteer groups and support services and spent a lot of time together. At just 18 they are forced to start again in a new city, picking up the pieces of a life they have no control over. Only now they are mainstream adult asylum seekers. The prospect is so terrifying that some Separated children chose to abscond before their 18th birthday rather than face the prospect of turning 18 in the 'system'. And make no mistake, as terrifying as this is, one AOM described the move from Dublin to Waterford 'as bad as the move from Africa to Ireland'.

AOMs started 'officially' being moved to Waterford from Dublin by the Reception & Integration Agency (RIA) and the HSE in 2010. However there were relocations before that and the city already had a number of 'unrecognised minors', or those under the age of 18 who were placed directly in to adult accommodation. The Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, in conjunction with the Health Service Executive, may have made an inaccurate age determination.

The process of relocation to Waterford differs for each young person, ranging from smooth to impossible. 21 AOMs have officially been placed in Waterford that the [Integration and Support Unit \(ISU\) of the Edmund Rice Centre](#) know of, with 4 babies born either before or after relocation. However, 9 AOMs have since moved on for a range of reasons including further transfer to other hostels, deportation, choice and education.

There are many issues to address regarding the relocation of an AOM to a new city, education and accommodation being the biggest. The prospect of moving to an adult hostel can be terrifying to an 18 year old girl who has spent the previous two years in a girls-only hostel for under 18's. For the boys the perspective is different, they can be enamoured with this adult company and many have let school slip while they try to fit in with the crowd already living in the hostel.

School, there's a dirty word. Despite both the HSE and RIA claiming that Separated children and AOMs would not be moved during school years, Waterford has seen several relocations during the academic year. Two male AOMs were moved during the Christmas holidays, one in fifth year and one in sixth year. Both failed to make the transition and dropped out of school entirely. Even those moved during summer holidays were unsuccessful in their new school, as the move was simply too overwhelming to manage. To date just one male AOM who was moved before finishing Leaving Cert has managed to transition to the new school and be successful. It is not that the mainstream schools did not make every effort to accommodate the new arrivals; it was more that the young people themselves could not maintain their place during this turbulent time in their lives. Early school leaver projects such as Youth Reach and [XLC](#) have stepped in.

After finishing the Leaving Cert, AOMs in Waterford are dependent entirely on securing funding for PLC courses from the One Foundation Education Bursary. Options are few: the Waterford Institute of Technology will only enrol asylum seekers in part-time courses, and Waterford College of Further Education (WCFE) will only allow asylum seekers on evening courses, both at full cost. A FETAC level 5 course in Childcare at WCFE in Oct 2012 was 3330 euro, and even then courses are often cancelled due to low numbers. Needless to say the AOMs are forced to go for cheaper courses such as the European Computer Driving Licence which might be covered by a bursary.

Another point worth making is the change in support received from the HSE upon ageing-out. Staff from the HSE Team for Separated Children Seeking Asylum are engaged as Aftercare Workers when the young person ages-out, and are expected to take a step back from the young person. It would be fair to say that some staff have taken their roles above and beyond and kept regular contact with their assigned young people, visiting Waterford regularly to see them in person. However, it is also fair to say that some young people could not even tell you who their Aftercare worker is – or if they even have one. What really needs to be created is a specialist service in Waterford to pick up where the social workers leave off. Until now, this gap has been filled by the ISU, who have provided extensive supports to the young people during their relocation and thereafter around school,

accommodation, their application for asylum, health care, access to local services, , often advocating on their behalf when needed and much much more. The ISU however receives no funding to do this work, but will the HSE ever address this gap? Unlikely.

There are other organisations in Waterford who have stepped up to the plate and have been generous in their support of the AOMs and the work ISU is doing with them, Le Cheile Mentoring Project, Foroige Big Brother Big Sister, Barnardos Student Mother's Group and Squashy Couch come to mind immediately. Waterford Immigration Network and Regional Youth Services have also provided supports to AOMs in Waterford and deserve recognition, and outside of Waterford, the former Separated Children's Officer of Barnardos was invaluable, and certain members of the Team for Separated Children Seeking Asylum were unwavering in their support. However, the creation of the [Independent Advocacy Project](#) by the [Irish Refugee Council](#) has provided an entirely new dimension to the support the ISU can offer. This project has provided specific and focused support for Separated children and AOMs and those working with them; specialised, understanding and consistent availability. It has been with excitement that the ISU has embraced this project and the IRC's support in continuing to assist AOMs through their relocation to Waterford and in their new lives here in the Southeast.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/aged-out-minors-in-ireland-who-in-the-world-loses-everything-when-they-turn-18-separated-children-in-ireland/>

Assessment of Credibility in Protection Claims from Children

SUE CONLAN, CEO OF THE IRISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

In October 2012, a report entitled '[Difficult to believe: the assessment of asylum claims in Ireland](#)' was published by the Irish Refugee Council, analysing the approach taken by both the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) to applications for asylum. The report was based upon research undertaken between June and September 2012.

Of the 86 files included in the research, ten were claims by children (Six girls and four boys. One was a claim for family reunion and did not give rise to any issue under the Refugee Convention). Of these, three were born in Ireland to parents who were already in the asylum process. Children born after the parents claim asylum are required to claim asylum in order for the family to receive additional support for the child through the Reception and Integration Agency. This means without applying for asylum, the child would not be entitled to accommodation or the €9.60 allowance. The oldest of the three was just five months old when her father was interviewed about why *she* had claimed asylum. The claims of all three children were dismissed on the grounds that the credibility of their parents' applications had already been held to be lacking in credibility.

In the case of a Nigerian woman who feared that her daughter would be subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM), one of the reasons for dismissing the child's claim was that the mother had failed to disclose in her application that she had applied for asylum in Italy. As the mother's credibility had been dismissed in an earlier application, ORAC stated:

It follows that there is no credible objective basis to the fear attributed to the applicant by her mother.

In the combined appeal of the other two children, there was no reference to the children in the decision of the RAT, only to their father. In one of the cases, ORAC stated that they were unable to verify the authenticity of the Irish birth certificate.

In two separate, but related cases, two Nigerian girls had claimed asylum on the grounds that they had been brought to Ireland, subjected to domestic servitude and sexually abused. Both had not made applications for almost a year after their arrival. One of them stated that she was looked after

by a couple after the violent death of her parents. One of the reasons given for dismissing her claim by ORAC was:

... it is difficult to believe the applicant would not remember if her family's deaths were or were not explained to her given the seriousness of this alleged incident.

The RAT dismissed her claims partly on the grounds that her father, whom she stated was a doctor, was not named in any Country of Origin Information.

Of the three claims submitted on behalf of unaccompanied boys, two were from Somalia and one was from Afghanistan. In one of the Somali claims, the application had been made in December 2006. He was interviewed seven months later but there was no ORAC decision for a further two and a half years, almost four years after he had submitted his application.

At interview, the interpreter was only available on the phone but, after a break, they were unable to reconnect with the interpreter and the interview was concluded in English. A lot of the questions were on his knowledge of Somalia (language analysis had been used to dispute his claim to be from Somalia). He was, for example, asked to name the islands around his village. He named three of them.

In his ORAC decision, three issues regarding knowledge of the Bajuni clan and the geography of the country were relied upon to dispute the credibility of his claim:

*The applicant named only three of the six Bajuni islands off the coast of Kismayo
Country of origin information indicated that Bajuni are fishermen, however, the applicant has
stated that his father was a farmer"*

*The applicant claims that the Darod and Hawiye were fighting in his village, when asked
which sub clans of these clans were fighting in his village he did not know.*

In the second Somali case, ORAC did not dispute that he was from Somalia. It was stated that the Country of Origin Information supported his claim to be from a minority clan. He was instead refused on the grounds that he had previously applied for asylum in three other European countries.

The RAT refused his appeal partly on the grounds that the rest of his family had remained in Somalia. He himself had stated that his family paid for him to leave as he was the eldest.

The boy from Afghanistan had travelled from Afghanistan, Pakistan and via France and the United Kingdom before arriving in Ireland. At his ORAC interview he was told:

If you cannot be truthful about your travel, how is this office meant to believe what you tell us today.

He had in fact lied about travelling to the United Kingdom from France. ORAC therefore wrote in their decision refusing his claim:

... doubt is cast over the remainder of the Applicant's testimony which cannot be verified.

He was issued with a Deportation Order in September 2011.

In the case of a girl from Ethiopia who claimed to have been politically active at school leading to her exclusion from school and arrest, she was asked at interview about her knowledge of political groups and the political situation in the country. In the ORAC decision, she was partly refused on the grounds that she had given two different accounts as to how she was scalded by tea whilst in detention: in her questionnaire she had said that it was poured over her but in interview she said she had been slapped whilst she held the tea.

Her appeal to the Tribunal was not heard until three years after ORAC refused her claim. The RAT partly dismissed her appeal on the grounds that she only disclosed, for the first time at the hearing, that her father had been shot in the hand. The case was remitted for a new hearing by a different Tribunal Member.

Children go through the same process as adults in the asylum process in Ireland, including the completion of the [same questionnaire](#) as adults. ORAC states that it has specially trained caseworkers to process cases from unaccompanied minors. In reality, it is difficult to see that the claims from children are treated with any more respect than those of adults.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/assessment-of-credibility-in-protection-claims-from-children/>

Experiences of Supporting Separated Children in the United Kingdom and Ireland

TOM ADAMS, ADVOCATE WITH THE INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY PILOT

Before moving to Ireland in 2011 I worked as a keyworker for an organisation that provides semi-independent accommodation and support to separated children (or unaccompanied asylum seeking children, as they are deemed in the UK) in London. I will give a brief overview of how the asylum process for unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the United Kingdom (UK) contrasts to Ireland.

Age Assessment & the Provision of Care

When a person arrives in the UK seeking asylum they generally come to the attention of the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA), the equivalent of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner in Ireland. As in Ireland, the provision available to minors is very different to that of adults so UKBA make an initial decision as to whether a person's 'physical appearance and/or demeanour very strongly indicates that they are significantly over 18'. If deemed to be adults they could potentially be selected for the morally reprehensible 'Detained Fast Track' procedure, which requires them to be detained while waiting for their decision. A recent [Children's Legal Centre report](#) indicated that as a result of this procedure children, erroneously classified as adults by UKBA, are being held in detention. The detention of children was a previous policy of the UK government, with children of failed asylum seekers detained in the Family Unit of the notorious Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre between 2001 and 2010, before public outcry led to its closure. In its prohibition of detaining children for immigration purposes Ireland has been less regressive than the UK.

If those seeking asylum in the UK are deemed to be minors (or not significantly over 18) they fall under the care of a Local Authority (LA). This differs from Ireland, which places separated children under the care of the HSE. The types of care utilised is similar, however, with LA generally placing under 16's in foster care and under 18's in some form of semi-supported accommodation. There is also parity in the fact that care provision for unaccompanied asylum seeking children is generally less regulated than for other children in residential care. Care placement is almost invariably a traumatic process. Many young people referred to the service I worked for in London had no prior experience of independent living and, used to family members cooking for them, found mealtimes a difficult reminder of all they had lost. Due to limited resources others were placed in houses where they were sharing with young people from different countries who spoke different languages,

compounding their isolation. The culture change, the English language, the city life: all of these caused disorientation.

Upon receiving a new referral, the LA will also conduct an age-assessment. While age-assessment in the UK is more regularised than in Ireland, due to the adoption of safeguarding guidelines based on the 2003 [Merton](#) judgment, it is still an inexact science. When a 'Merton compliant' age-assessment was conducted on an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child I worked with, the decision-making social worker solicited my uninformed opinion on the young male's age. In one case, they based their subsequent decision on something as subjective as "the way he winked at me during the interview." Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK generally qualify for Discretionary Leave to Remain until they are 18 years old. With age-assessments determining the amount of time they fall under this protection, it is consequently a highly contentious process that generates many age disputes.

Access to Justice

It is the responsibility of the LA to find immigration solicitors for the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that fall under its care. While those seeking asylum qualify for legal aid in the UK, funding cuts have reduced the amount of places offering legal representation. Quality varies among those that do provide legal aid. When I accompanied a Moroccan young person to his solicitor's appointment, the solicitor had booked an interpreter from Syria that spoke a completely different dialect of Arabic. With every nuance of an applicant's story examined, and credibility so critical, such a lack of attentiveness is deplorable. Many of the young people I worked with found it distressing to constantly repeat their harrowing experiences to strangers in these appointments. The [Children's Society](#) indicates that many children "are not fully aware of the reasons they have left their home country and find it difficult to articulate these succinctly." Yet while asylum applications are generally more successful in the UK than in Ireland (which, as recent [Irish Refugee Council](#) report attests, has a particularly adversarial asylum system), there is a similar 'culture of disbelief' that fails to take children's circumstances into account.

Another common feature of both Irish and UK asylum processes is the delays faced by applicants. One unaccompanied asylum-seeking child I worked with had submitted his application in 2006 and, because of a backlog of 450,000 asylum applications at the Home Office, was still waiting on a decision in 2011. Those that have turned 18 and had their applications and appeals rejected are left in an even more tortuous limbo, denied work and education and with the threat of deportation constantly hanging over them. An Afghan young person I worked with had been in this situation for

two years before he was abruptly detained and – after more uncertainty in the form of cancelled flights and misinformation from security personnel – deported to Kabul, where he had no family and no means to support himself. A Kurdish young person endured a similar wait but was not deported because neither Iran nor Iraq would accept him as a citizen, and so has been left in a stateless no-man’s land where he cannot leave the UK despite the fact that it refuses to offer him any form of sanctuary.

In sum, there are various similarities and disparities between the Irish and UK asylum processes, but a constant in both systems is the heavy toll placed on the wellbeing of those seeking asylum, particularly in the case of children. [Research](#) published in the UK Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry affirms “lone asylum seeking children are at much greater risk of mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress symptoms.” The intolerable demands of the asylum process only serve to exacerbate such conditions and harm those most in need of help.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/experiences-of-supporting-separated-children-in-the-united-kingdom-and-ireland/>

Providing a future for separated children? Obstacles to accessing third level education

DR CLIODHNA MURPHY, LECTURER IN THE SCHOOL OF LAW AND GOVERNMENT AT DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

The [Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management \(“Migration Nation”\)](#) published by the Office of the Minister for Integration in 2008 emphasised a social inclusion approach to integration, which focussed on the delivery of services for new communities and practical issues such as language education and interpretation and translation in an effort to “avoid the creation of parallel societies, communities and urban ghettos.” In the financial crisis which followed the publication of this report, perhaps the most significant of the integration “casualties” of the economic recession and the consequent reorientation of government policy was the abolition of the position of the Minister for Integration in 2011. The [Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration](#) still exists but without any real policy direction outside of the 2008 statement and operating with a very small budget. In these circumstances, despite the elaboration of various “intercultural strategies” by the Garda Síochána, FÁS and the Department of Education, the development of a coherent, nuanced and holistic integration policy in Ireland seems unlikely in the near future.

Among the groups of migrants who have been tolerated by the Irish state but have certainly not been the beneficiaries of a policy designed to welcome them as future members of and contributors to Irish society are separated children. This post highlights some of the barriers faced by separated children in accessing third level education – a potential route out of poverty and marginalisation.

Issues identified by the Ombudsman for Children in its [report](#) on Separated Children Living in Ireland the provision of education for separated children included the division of classrooms between Irish and international students, the lack of a supportive environment in which to complete homework, and, in one case, a guidance counsellor who did not supply CAO forms to separated children who had not been granted refugee status. One young person known to me personally has told me that African children joining her school were generally placed in a “transition year” class together and were not integrated into the mainstream of the school but largely left to their own devices.

Those separated children who manage to overcome these hurdles (as well as possible language difficulties and often being placed in local areas with high levels of social and educational disadvantage) and obtain a place in third level education are faced with the legal and administrative minefield which is obtaining the financial support necessary to allow them to take up this place. First, the legal status of such children is key to determining their access to the [Free Fees Initiative](#). Only refugees are entitled to have their fees paid on the same basis as Irish citizens. Those who have been granted humanitarian leave to remain or persons in respect of whom the Minister for Justice and Law Reform has granted permission to remain following a determination not to make a deportation order under section 3 of the [Immigration Act 1999](#) may be considered for free tuition fees. The residency requirement is applicable to these groups just as it is to Irish citizens and they must have resided in Ireland for three of the previous five years. This residency requirement may preclude access for many of these separated children.

Access to [student maintenance grants](#) provided by local authorities is also dependent on the same restrictions related to nationality, legal status and residence. For those who manage to satisfy the burdensome administrative requirements and obtain a grant, there have been [serious delays in processing](#) these grants which may result in these students, without alternative means of support from parents or family members, dropping out. An alternative source of funding, the [Back to Education Allowance](#), is only available for those who are over 21 and who have been receiving a “qualifying payment” (including Jobseekers Allowance) for at least nine months. There is anecdotal evidence that this has forced social workers to advise students with refugee status leaving school to draw Jobseekers Allowance for a year before going back and reapplying for the Back to Education Allowance.

The obstacles to accessing third level education make it virtually impossible for separated children on the verge of “ageing out” to access third level education in the same manner as their Irish classmates or other migrant children with the financial backing of their parents. Far from recognising the specific difficulties faced by this group of young people, Irish law and administrative practice treats them exactly the same as anyone else in the system, resulting in a huge inequality in practice. The other option for separated children, who have been granted legal residence and who do not go on to obtain any further qualification to the Leaving Certificate, involves most likely taking up a low-paid job and joining the cycle of inequality and relative poverty which is inimical to integration and can lead to the creation of the “urban ghettos” which Irish integration policy is so keen to avoid. Reflecting the fact that “integration” is not just about migrants but about society as a whole, these

are serious educational issues which affect not just separated children but also Irish children and migrant children coming from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/providing-a-future-for-separated-children-obstacles-to-accessing-third-level-education/>

LGBT Asylum Seekers and Refugee Youth

JOHN DUFFY, YOUTH WORKER IN BELONG TO YOUTH SERVICES

I've been working with [BeLonG To](#) for the last 5 years and since I started, and particularly over the last 12 months, the BeLonG To team have been working with an ever increasing number of asylum seekers and refugee youth who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender (LGBT).

As with all asylum seekers and refugees, there are a large number of difficulties which they have to negotiate. This includes the persecution they experienced in their home country, the difficulties they have all too often experienced en route to Ireland and the economic and social hardships that they often have to deal with in Ireland.

For those that are LGBT there are particular nuances in the difficulties that they experience in their journey to finding refuge. Some are unique, others are typical of the universal experience of refugee and asylum youth. These can be divided into many different areas, but I wish to focus this discussion on 2 particular topics: accommodation and integration.

On the first there has been an ever increasing awareness that a "[one size fits all](#)" approach to the accommodation of asylum seekers is not working. Changes have been made in terms of unaccompanied minors, and this small step is to be welcomed, but persistent difficulties are still present for others living in direct provision. For LGBT asylum seekers, there is nearly always a fear that the homophobia from which they fled will be present in their new home. Many feel that they have no option but to keep their sexual orientation/gender identity (SOGI) hidden throughout their time living in state provided accommodation.

The effects of this is stark and limits the possibility for people in this situation to come to terms with their past experiences of persecution and their ability to begin a healing process to positively cope with trauma which often comes with their past. Notwithstanding these needs, it also delays personal acceptance of their SOGI.

Coming out for LGBT people is an important step in all LGBT people's lives. Doing that in a safe environment, free from the possibility of further isolation and marginalisation is simply not a lived reality for the vast majority of people we have worked with. Great lengths have been made by people living in direct provision to hide their SOGI. This has included limiting their gender expression, isolating themselves from other residents, keeping documents relating to their asylum case with them at all times and requesting transfers to other centres if suspicions about their identity emerge. This leads on to the issue of integration.

Hiding one's identity is a limiting factor in being able to connect to others, including peers and a support network. Thankfully some do seek out these supports and that is aided by the approach that many organisations have made to be more LGBT friendly. Baleskin Reception Centre, the Irish Refugee Council and many others have been displaying LGBT affirmative posters in their communal areas. These simple signs have encouraged LGBT people to talk to staff about their needs and to come out. Referrals to services like BeLonG To have been on the increase and many social needs are consequently being addressed.

However, the potential for marginalisation and multiple discrimination is still present. The LGBT, new communities and NGO's working in this area need to further enhance and continue dialogue between each other to ensure that this groups needs are being adequately addressed and that their voices are being heard by the wider community. The approach which BeLonG To has taken in the development of its work with asylum seekers and refugees has been one of dialogue with the many actors in this arena. Although progress has been made and the situation of many LGBT asylum seekers and refugees have improved, these steps are tentative and many more need to take place before integration and acceptance has truly taken place.

Please check out BeLonG To's recent [video and report](#) on their LGBT Asylum Seeker and Refugee Project for more information.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/lgbt-asylum-seekers-and-refugee-youth/>

Conclusion: Separated Children in Ireland

DR LIAM THORNTON, LECTURER IN LAW IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

A number of core themes and issues have emerged from today's blog carnival, organised by Samantha Arnold of the Irish Refugee Council.

In [Samantha's post](#), she noted that separated children need to be cared for under the Child Care Act 1991, and the challenges that social workers faced when dealing with separated children in Ireland. Samantha looked at how the Independent Advocacy Pilot was leading to better outcomes for separated children, yet also the enormous challenges facing separated children as they transition to adulthood. [Lisa has noted](#) the sense of purpose and achievement of involvement with the Independent Advocacy Pilot and has emphasised the role of the voice of the child as being key to understanding their needs, wishes and dreams. Tom, relying on his expertise from working with separated children in both the UK and Ireland concludes that while there are differences between both jurisdictions, a key unifier is, how the treatment of separated children by the state can add to the already enormous toll these children are under. This theme is taken forward by both [Muireann](#) and [Brian](#). Muireann notes the positive impact of fostering for separated children, how it gives these children a sense of belonging and provides much needed stability. Brian, discusses the issue of adulthood of aged out minors and the pitfalls involved in the direct provision system for these very vulnerable young men and women. [Jenna](#) is direct and correct in her analysis of the sense of loss faced by aged-out separated children, who will be moved into the direct provision system, and who may lose contact with those they have built up relationships with. However, as Jenna notes, the Independent Advocacy Pilot provides a platform for these young people to have their voices heard. [John \(BeLong To\) in his post](#) has examined the toll which the direct provision system can have on LGBT young people (in particular those who are aged out minors), being secretive about their sexuality and gender identity, and the problems this may have for integration in Irish society. (I have argued previously on this blog that the [direct provision system has no legal basis](#) and is solely designed [to punish and potentially deter those who may claim asylum](#) in Ireland). [Cliodhna provides](#) an oversight as to how separated children, who complete their secondary education in Ireland, have limited options once they complete their Leaving Certificate, with university attendance being an almost impossible goal for many. [Sue, the CEO of the Irish Refugee Council](#), provides a worrying analysis of how children are treated within the refugee status determination bodies and the lack of a child centered approach to claims for refugee status.

The leading role that the Irish Refugee Council has taken in the Independent Advocacy Pilot is to be commended. Once again, it has been civil society organisations that have been to the forefront of campaigns to protect the vulnerable, with limited concern (or interest) by the state or citizens of this state for the plight of separated children and young asylum seekers. The [Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill](#) will do little to modify the current asylum and protection system, which is at the heart of the issues discussed in this blog carnival today. Just over a month since our constitution recognised “the natural and imprescriptible rights of **all** children”, we await administrative agencies and state organs to ensure that this legal obligation towards all children in the state is truly protected, respected and vindicated.

<http://www.humanrights.ie/index.php/2012/12/12/conclusion-separated-children-in-ireland/#more-16982>