

Summary of Referendum Campaign Activities

The Children's Referendum took place on 10 November 2012 and was carried by 58% of the electorate. The Children's Rights Alliance advocated for the holding of a referendum to strengthen children's rights and played a critical role in the Yes Campaign. The following is a summary of the Alliance's main activities during the referendum campaign.

1. Information Materials and Commentary

Analysis of the Constitutional Amendment on Children: The Alliance developed a suite of materials for member organisations and members of the public to raise awareness and understanding of the amendment and why a referendum was needed. These documents were widely distributed and are available on our website:

- [Summary Explanation of Amendment Wording](#)
- [Short Guide to the Children's Referendum](#)
- [Nóta Treorach maidir le Reifreann na Leanáí](#)
- [Detailed analysis of the Children's Amendment](#)
- [Note on the Children's Referendum and Disability](#)
- [Campaign Toolkit for the Children's Referendum](#)
- [Background Material to the Children's Referendum](#)

Blogs and Academic Articles: The Alliance produced a series of blogposts on the referendum on the Human Rights in Ireland blog and for the Young Fine Gael blog calling for a Yes vote in the Children's Referendum. For example:

- [The Children's Referendum: The Time is now for Children's Rights in our Constitution](#) (19 September 2012). This received well over 1,400 views.
- [The kids are all right? – The case for constitutional reform](#) (26 October 2012)
- [Next steps for children's rights in Ireland](#) (19 November 2012)

In addition, the Alliance produced two articles for academic journals explaining what the legal impact of the referendum wording would be for practitioners. These articles were published in The Irish Journal of Family Law (2012) 15 (4) IJFL 95 and The Bar Review.

2. Engagement with Member Organisations

Engagement with the membership and friends: The Alliance kept its over 100 member organisations and its nearly 300 individual supporters on its 'friends' list updated regularly on the progress of the campaign via email, briefings and individual phone calls.

An audit of member organisations was undertaken to ascertain The Alliance their position and many took an active role in the campaign. Seventy-seven of the Alliance's 100 member organisations were

able to adopt a public position calling for a Yes vote – a significant achievement as many organisations had never before taken a public position in a referendum. Members also got involved by adding the Yes campaign to their email signature, 17 organisations added Yes widgets to their website – a ribbon and countdown to Referendum day clock and a further four put links from their homepage to the Yes for Children website. At least 10 organisations shared our videos, facebook posts and tweets, and forwarded our emails to their mailing lists.

The multiplier effect when our members share our material is enormous, given the breadth and diversity of their own membership bases and networks and also the scale of their networks many of which run into the tens of thousands.

Children’s Rights Alliance Constitutional Working Group: In order to build support and deepen engagement among the Alliance membership for the referendum, the Alliance formed a Constitutional Working Group in March 2012 which met regularly to engage members in the referendum-related work of the Alliance and seek their views and ideas for our campaign. This Working Group later merged into the National Co-ordinating Committee for the Yes Campaign.

Messaging and Media Training: The Alliance developed strong and consistent messaging to persuade the public to vote Yes and produced a Campaign Toolkit to assist our members in their work. This included for example, template press releases and letters. The Alliance provided professional media training to 25 member organisation spokespeople, including a range of young people from four member organisations. The Alliance covered the cost of this media training.

3. Targeted External Engagement

Public Affairs: The wording of the proposed amendment to the Constitution was published on 19 September 2012. The Alliance organised a successful briefing for parliamentarians on the constitutional reform for children in conjunction with Senator Jillian van Turnhout on 18 July 2012. All members of the Oireachtas were invited to the briefing, which was very well attended with 24 members or their representatives present. The aim of the briefing was to convey the message of why the Alliance believed an amendment to the Constitution was necessary and why the members should support it if the wording was sufficiently strong.

The Alliance organised another briefing for parliamentarians following the publication of the wording for the Children’s Referendum, in conjunction with Senator Jillian van Turnhout on 26 September 2012. Again, all members of the Oireachtas were invited and 40 members or their representatives were present. The aim of the briefing was to provide an initial analysis of the amendment to Oireachtas members and to influence and encourage debate on the amendment.

Connector Activation: The Alliance developed the 150 Connectors Project, based on an idea from *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell. These connectors represented 150 key individuals and organisations in Ireland. The theory is that in engaging with the right influential people and sectors in society, the message to vote Yes will spread quickly and widely across the electorate. Individual meetings, as well as larger briefing events were held with a variety of stakeholders, providing an important opportunity to engage them in a discussion on the proposed amendment and to mobilise groups to get out and vote. A large range of additional activities flowed from these interactions, including writing newsletter articles, providing media training for groups and making presentations at other follow-up events.

- Individual meetings were held with senior influencers – representatives of key interest groups and well-known and connected individuals, including commentators, university presidents, Irish language leaders, religious leaders, and individuals from the business and entrepreneurial worlds.

- Individual briefing events were held with groups, including: faith leaders, trade unions, legal practitioners, political representatives, community and voluntary organisations, parents' groups, disability organisations, educational management bodies, and with Irish language users.
- The Alliance was also invited to speak at a number of political party events and debates.
- Groups from all sides came out in favour of the amendment, including the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, SIPTU and the Irish Countrywomen's Association. The Alliance had interaction with all of these groups through its 150 Connectors Project. This is a massive achievement as this represents the first time that some of these groups have publicly taken a position on a referendum, demonstrating the widespread support in this country for constitutional reform to improve the lives of children.
- The Alliance interacted with well over 300 connectors through this project.

Campaign Briefings

- *Alliance campaign launch:* The Alliance's campaign on the referendum was launched on 11 October 2012 at a Members' Briefing at which we published our analysis of the wording of the amendment. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald TD, addressed this briefing. The event received wide media coverage.
- *Early Childhood Briefing:* Held on 23 October, in conjunction with Alliance member organisation Early Childhood Ireland, the briefing targeted organisations working in the early childhood sector. Early Childhood Ireland vigorously campaigning for a YES vote.
- *Legal Briefing:* Held on 23 October, and co-organised with Campaign for Children as a Yes for Children event, this was an information session for the legal profession on the Children's Referendum, chaired by Judge Donal Barrington, Supreme Court and High Court, European Court of Justice. Over 70 people came to the Law Library, to hear Judge Catherine McGuinness, former Supreme Court Judge and Campaign for Children Chair; Catherine Ghent, Gallagher Shatter Solicitors; Conor Power, Barrister; and Muriel Walls, McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors speak on the Children's Referendum. The Bar Council and the Law Society subsequently came out in favour of a Yes vote.
- *Educational Briefing:* Held on 24 October, the speakers for the Education Sector were Conor O'Mahony from the Law Faculty, UCC and the Alliance's Maria Corbett. This briefing was well attended by various organisations, including the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals, the National Centre for Guidance in Education, and the Irish Second Level Students' Union.
- *Irish Language Briefing:* Held on 25 October, the Alliance organised this briefing under the banner of Yes for Children and in conjunction with Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta. Their Chief Executive, Clíona Frost, chaired the briefing. This was the only information session in the Irish language on the Children's Referendum. Speakers included Joe O'Toole, Campaign for Children; Sinead Ní Chulacháin, Barrister; and Pól Ó Murchú, Solicitor. The briefing was live-streamed to allow Irish speaking communities throughout Ireland the opportunity to listen in and over 100 people did so. TG4, Radió na Life and Radió na Gaeltachta covered the briefing and Foinse ran a 200 word article from Tanya Ward, Chief Executive on the benefits of the amendment. Radió na Gaeltachta also used the briefing as a foundation stone to conduct their only live debate on the Children's Referendum. A recording is available on our website: <http://childrensrights.ie/resources/seisi%C3%BAn-faisn%C3%A9ise-ar-reifreann-ar>.

- *Disability Briefing*: Held on 31 October, in conjunction with Disability Federation of Ireland, the event was chaired by Joanne McCarthy, Disability Federation of Ireland and speakers included Joe O’Toole, Campaign for Children; Pat Clarke, Down Syndrome Ireland; and Tanya Ward, Alliance Chief Executive. The briefing was aimed at service users, parents, advocates and those working in disability organisations.

4. Media Coverage

Media coverage was extensive. Coverage of specific events is noted throughout the document. We have not compiled a complete list of all the media coverage that we have generated but the material below provides a flavour of the coverage.

The Alliance was invited to participate in media interviews and debates including:

- Newstalk Lunchtime Show (17 Sept 2012)
- WLRMF (17 Sept 2012)
- The Late Debate (17 Sept 2012)
- The 2FM Colm Hayes Show (18 Sept 2012)
- Donegal Highland Radio (18 Sept 2012)
- FM 104 (18 Sept 2012)
- Today FM (1 November 2012)
- [Newstalk Sunday Show](#) (4 November 2012)
- Eastcoast FM (5 November 2012)
- Connamera Radio (6 November 2012)
- [Sunshine](#) 106 FM (6 November 2012)
- [Morning Ireland](#) (8 Nov 2012)

Other notable media items involving the Alliance’s Chief Executive include:

- RTE news (11 October 2012)
- The Irish Times and the Chief Executive did an Irish Times video to camera piece ([available here](#)) on the referendum campaign which has since received 659 views.
- Interview on Shannonside Radio (25 October 2012)
- Debate on Phoenix FM (25 October 2012)
- Debate with Malachy Steenson on Ocean FM (31 October 2012)
- RTE’s [Primetime](#) package on the referendum (30 October 2012)
- TV3’s [Ireland AM](#) (31 October 2012).

The Alliance also produced a high number of opinion pieces, including:

- [Cork Independent](#) by the Chief Executive entitled: ‘Not radical, but very much needed’ (25 October 2012)
- The [Irish Catholic](#) (1 November 2012)
- [Women’s Way](#) (5 November 2012)
- SIPTU’s [Liberty News](#) (November Issue)
- INTO News
- The [Journal](#) ‘Eastenders plot has no bearing on Children’s Referendum’ by the Chief Executive which received 12,834 views and 77 comments (8 November 2012)
- The [Irish Independent](#) (9 November 2012) and [additional commentary](#) after the referendum result (12 November 2012)
- An article was published on what happens next after the referendum for the [Journal](#) which received 3,474 views.

5. Alliance's Campaign Online

When engaging with the public, the Alliance directed people to our [website](#) for further information. Visits to the website spiked with 1,999 visits on 9 November 2012. Our Referendum page received 21,712 views in 2012.

Information on the referendum that was produced in-house received the following number of hits:

- Strengthening Children's Rights in the Constitution – 952
- Short Guide to the Children's Referendum – 943
- Summary Explanation of Amendment Wording – 857
- Frequently Asked Questions on the Children's Referendum – 698

Daily views on our YouTube channel peaked on 7 November 2012 with 1,746 views.

The Alliance engaged extensively in social media during the referendum campaign and we saw our Facebook and Twitter followers increased considerably during this period. As of April 2013, we have 2,977 followers on Twitter and 4,097 Facebook followers (people who have 'liked' the organisation and thus receive our updates).

6. Alliance's Work with Other Organisations

The Alliance actively contributed to the Yes Campaign through mobilising its own members to support the referendum, providing training/resources to members, reaching out to influential connectors to garner their support for the referendum, organising briefings, speaking at public events, contributing to the Yes for Children Campaign and doing media work. The Alliance was represented on the Board and Management Group of Campaign for Children, which ran the 'Yes For Children' campaign.

Videos: The Alliance created a series of short videos with members and connectors to demonstrate the breadth of support for the Children's Referendum, for uploaded to websites and YouTube channels. With filming conducted over one day, this was a cost-effective way to develop stand-alone clips for multiple dissemination opportunities.

Videos were filmed with:

- Pat Clarke (Down Syndrome Ireland)
- Maeve Lewis (One in Four)
- Daire Keogh (St Patrick's College)
- Pól Ó Murchú, Solicitor (in English and Irish)
- Senator Jillian van Turnhout
- Aine Lynch (National Parents' Council Primary)
- Paul Gilligan (Chair, Children's Rights Alliance)
- Irene Gunning (Early Childhood Ireland)
- Two young people from Spunout and the National Youth Council of Ireland

All are available here: <http://www.youtube.com/user/cradub>. These produced a total of 38,743 views through our website.

Parents' Press Conference: Alliance also facilitated a Parents' Press Conference on 31 October 2012, in which six key parents' organisations came together to dispel misinformation about the Children's Referendum and to call for a YES vote. The event was chaired by Áine Lynch, National Parents Council Primary; and speakers included Olive Good, Mothers' Union; Jackie O'Callaghan, National Parents Council Post-Primary; Karen Kiernan, One Family; Frances Byrne OPEN; and Margot Doherty, Treoir. The event garnered media coverage on RTE, TV3 and in The Irish Times and symbolised the fact that everyday parents supported the Children's Referendum.

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2012/1031/breaking57.html>

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/1031/childrens-referendum.html#video>

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/1031/childrens-referendum.html#article>

http://www.tv3.ie/news.php?request=&tv3_preview=&video=55134

Intergenerational Solidarity Press Conference: The Alliance co-hosted a press conference with Older and Bolder on 8 November 2012 to encourage older people to vote Yes in the referendum. A grandmother and a youth represented from Foróige provided personal testimonies as to the importance of voting yes.

Photo-calls: The Alliance further supported the Yes campaign by helping to organise three separate photo-calls:

- The first photo-call featured Mary O'Rourke (who chaired the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children), Cathleen O'Neill (community activist) and Lorraine Keane (TV presenter/author) on 1 November 2012, where they were joined by children from the Iveagh Trust Buildings and Tanya Ward, Chief Executive. A photograph and accompanying article appeared in The Irish Times:
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2012/1102/1224326035395.html>
- Working with Children's Books Ireland, the Alliance arranged a photo-call with Laureate na nÓg, Niamh Sharkey, to urge the electorate to secure a strong turnout for the referendum. The Children's Laureate called on the People of Ireland to "Make Your Mark" and was joined by young children, who were part of a workshop, organised by member organisation, The Ark. Coverage from this photo-call was extensive appearing in Metro Herald, the Irish Independent, the Mirror and The Irish Times.
- The Alliance also set up a Yes for Children photo-call, which took place on Tuesday 6 November 2012, outside Liberty Hall, with a series of trade unions. With the Alliance's connections with the unions, it was possible to secure Jack O'Connor (SIPTU); David Joyce (ICTU); Sheila Nunan (INTO); and John Douglas (MANDATE).

7. Voter Mobilisation Strategy

In the final week of the campaign, the Alliance incorporated its work on the Connectors Project into the wider Yes for Children Voter Mobilisation Strategy. As well as sending emails to encouraging members and connectors to PLEDGE, SHARE and VOTE on Saturday 10 November 2012, the Alliance also helped to facilitate the National Day of Action, which took place on Thursday 8 November 2012. The aim of the day was to canvass as many people as possible ahead of the Children's Rights Referendum, encouraging them to vote Yes. The Alliance was also very active on social media such as Facebook and Twitter to encourage subscribers to vote and to vote Yes.

Letter to Editor: The Alliance supported the compilation of a list of 100 key organisations who signed a Letter to Editor which was published in the *The Irish Times* on 7 November calling for a Yes vote. The list was a powerful indication of the breadth of support across Ireland for the amendment.