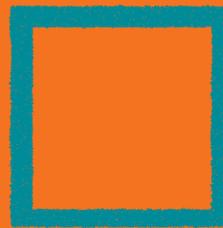
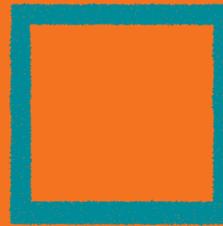
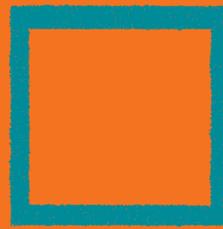


CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE

Uniting Voices For Children

report card 2017

Media Summary



IS GOVERNMENT KEEPING ITS PROMISES TO CHILDREN?

Foreword



The Children's Rights Alliance *Report Card 2017* is the ninth in the series and first under *A Programme for a Partnership Government*. As always, our independent panel of experts graded the Government's performance.

The new Government is awarded an overall 'D+' grade for its work on implementing commitments to children. While this is a lower grade than five Cs received by the previous Government, I should note that this new Government is being reviewed on its first seven months in office.

Overall, it is a mixed bag for children with no outstanding achievements quite yet. That said, the proposed Affordable Childcare Scheme will be a major step forward. High-quality and accessible childcare is known to impact positively on children's development. This area received the highest grade this year, a 'B'. Two further Cs, in the areas of 'Childminding' and 'Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care', resulted in the highest chapter grade this year – a 'C+' for 'Rights in Early Childhood'. The introduction of two weeks' paid paternity leave is also a real positive for families.

'Diversity in Schools' receives a 'D' grade. While we welcome the Government's ambitious target to transfer 18 new schools per year from religious patronage, only 10 such schools have opened since 2012. So decisive action is needed to speed up divestment. Also, the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 does nothing to address the 'baptism barrier'.

363,694 children under six now have access to free GP care, a positive step towards supporting their right to health. Yet, the promised roll-out of GP care to the under 12s has stalled, resulting in a 'D' grade for 'Primary Care'. One in four children is overweight or obese, and food poverty rates have increased from 10 to over 13 per cent, resulting in a 'C' grade in 'Physical Health and Wellbeing'.

'Mental Health' has never risen above a 'D' grade in recent years and 2017 is no different. The remit of the Youth Mental Health Taskforce is narrow and it is disappointing that it does not address some of the most serious issues for young people including long waiting lists. In September 2016 there were over 2,080 children waiting for an appointment with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Of these, 170 waited more than a year – up almost 20 per cent on the previous year. It is still unacceptable that children continue to be placed in adult psychiatric units despite criticism by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2016.

Under the 'Right to Equality', the publication of an LGBT+ strategy for young people receives a 'C+' grade. This is welcome and should help to improve the lives of many of the estimated 29,000 LGBT+ teens in Ireland. Ireland has begun to step up to its commitments under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme but not in time for *Report Card 2017*. So, 'Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children' received a fairly pitiful 'D-' grade. The joint lowest grade in the entire publication – a woeful 'E' – goes to 'Traveller and Roma Children'. Traveller children leave school an average of five years earlier than non-Travellers and are 3.6 times more likely to die in infancy. This Government, like its predecessors, has simply not done enough.

A second 'E' grade was awarded to 'Child and Family Homelessness' reflecting the horrific reality that there were 2,549 children living in homeless accommodation by the end of 2016. Homeless accommodation is no place for a child. One parent families account for 65 per cent of homeless families and more than a quarter of the same group lives in consistent poverty.

'Child Victims of Crime' is given a 'D' grade. Children who have been sexually abused face shocking delays in accessing counselling services, with one service provider (CARI) reporting an increase of over 200 per cent. This is compounded by only one 24-hour state service provision forensic examinations in Galway. This cannot continue.

Important infrastructural developments have happened in the last decade to support real progress on children's rights. Crucially, we have a Minister at Cabinet and a full Government department for children. We have a national policy framework, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, providing the roadmap for action. Let us take that roadmap and change the lives of the most marginalised. I am reminded of the eternal wisdom of Nelson Mandela: "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." Poor, frightened, alone, sick, abused or homeless – Ireland can and must do better for these children and for every child.

Tanya Ward
Chief Executive

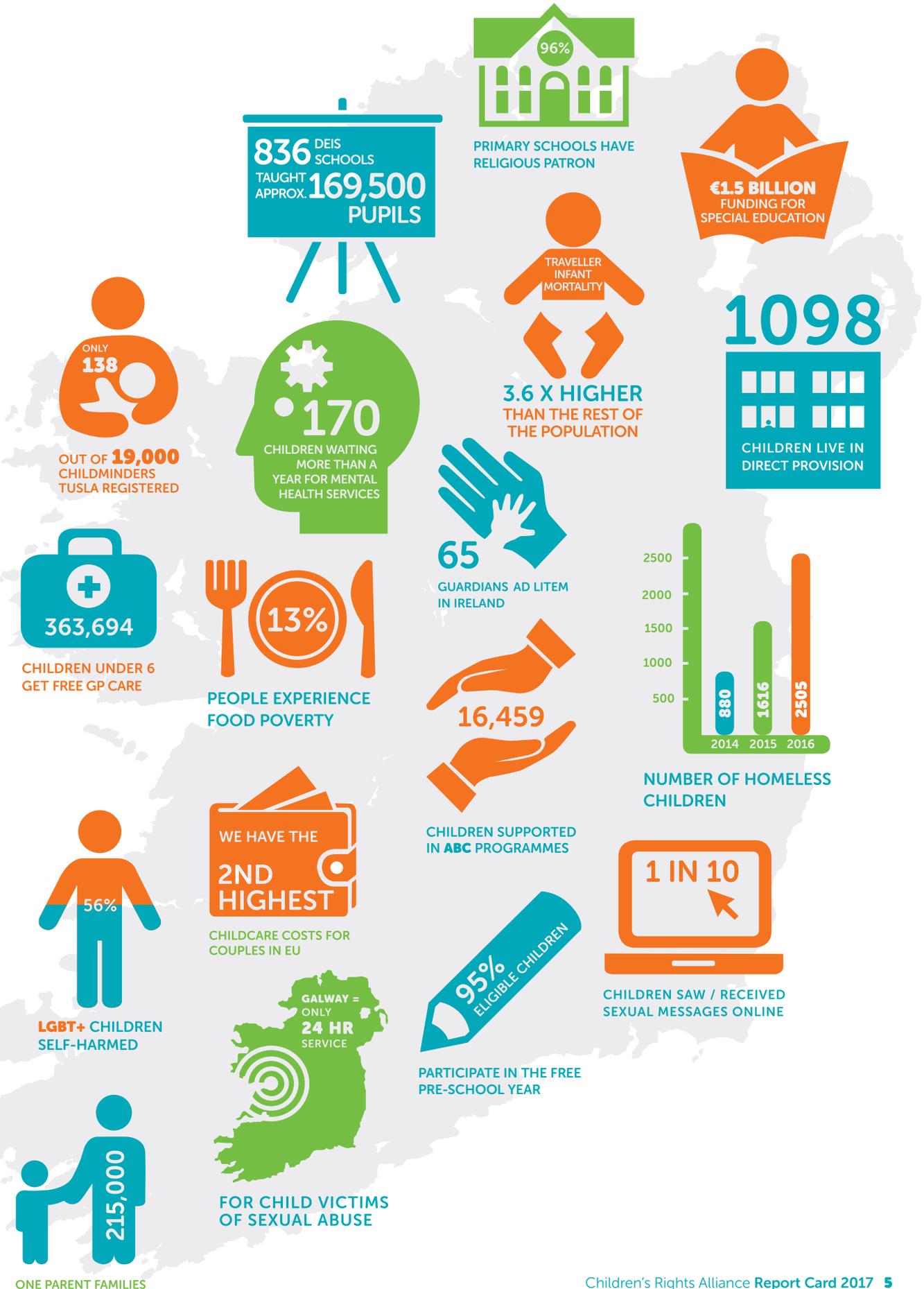
Grading for Report Card 2017

Overall Grade	D+
Right to an Adequate Standard of Living	C-
Child and Family Homelessness	E
Parental Leave and Income Supports	C+
Prevention and Early Intervention	C+
Rights in Early Childhood	C+
Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care	C-
Subsidised and School-Age Childcare	B
Childminding	C
Right to Education	D+
Educational Disadvantage	D
Diversity in Schools	D
Disability and Additional Needs in Education	C+
Right to Equality	D
Traveller and Roma Children	E
Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children	D-
LGBT+ Children and Young People	C+
Rights in the Family Environment and Alternative Care	D+
Guardian <i>ad Litem</i> Service	D
Child Protection	C
Child Victims of Crime	D
Right to Health	D+
Primary Care	D
Mental Health	D-
Physical Health and Wellbeing	C

Explanation of Grades:

- A Excellent, making a real difference to children's lives
- B Good effort, positive results for children
- C Satisfactory attempt, but children still left wanting
- D Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on children
- E Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on children
- F Fail, taking steps that undermine children's wellbeing
- N/A Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment

Key Facts and Statistics



Introduction

The Children's Rights Alliance unites over 100 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children in Ireland by making sure that their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services.

The Report Card is a tool for identifying serious issues for children. It is an established accountability tool for the Children's Rights Alliance and our members, as well as an important information resource for politicians, policy makers, service providers, non-governmental organisations and academics. It scrutinises the Government's own commitments to children flowing from its programme for government.

This is the ninth edition of our annual Report Card series, launched in 2009. *Report Card 2016* marked the final year of the five-year Fine Gael/Labour coalition Government and examined the commitments in the *Programme for Government 2011-2016*. Over its lifetime, the previous Government was awarded on average a 'C' grade overall. This reflects a number of vital commitments it fulfilled for children such as the establishment of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs with a seat at the cabinet table, a standalone department and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency as well as holding the Children's Referendum to insert the rights of children into the Irish Constitution. The grade also reflects areas in which challenges remained at the end of the Government's term such as child poverty, child and family homelessness and Traveller and Roma Children.

Report Card 2017 is the first edition of the new series and the first under *A Programme for a Partnership Government*. Following the General Election in February 2016, a Fine Gael-led Minority Government was formed with the Independent Alliance and Independent TDs. *A Programme for a Partnership Government* was published in May 2016.

With the new Government comes a new set of commitments to be examined in the Report Card. The commitments selected from *A Programme for a Partnership Government* for *Report Card 2017* are those that are likely to have the biggest impact on children's rights and those that are measurable under the format of the Report Card.

The research process for *Report Card 2017* involved desk research, semi-structured interviews, analysis of legal judgments and data and a wide-ranging consultation with member organisations and key

stakeholders. The grading was carried out by a high-level independent assessment panel, comprising some of Ireland's leading experts in child law and human rights and representatives from the business, trade union and media sectors as well as Social Partnership. *Report Card 2017* contains information up to the end of January 2017.

The Government is awarded an overall 'D+' grade in *Report Card 2017*, reflecting a barely acceptable performance to date with little or no positive impact on children. However, it must be remembered that this Government has only been in power since May 2016. While the highest grade in *Report Card 2017* is a 'B' for Subsidised and School-Age Childcare, the lowest grades have been awarded for Child and Family Homelessness and Traveller and Roma Children, both receiving an 'E'. The Children's Rights Alliance acknowledges the important groundwork that has been carried out in a number of areas but it is clear that much more must be done. We look forward to seeing greater progress over the coming year.