

The Twenty Eight Amendment
to the Constitution

Submission

from

Children in Hospital Ireland

to

The Joint Committee on the
Constitutional Amendment on Children

**Children in Hospital Ireland
Carmichael Centre
Coleraine House
Coleraine Street
Dublin 7**

January 2008

Children in Hospital Ireland

As a national organisation with five hundred members active throughout the country, Children in Hospital Ireland works with policy makers and health professionals to promote the rights, welfare and wellbeing of all sick children by drawing attention to their need for emotional security. The organisation supports parents before, during and after a child's stay in hospital.

Children in Hospital Ireland promotes its Charter for Children in Hospital – the EACH Charter – as a rights based standard for the provision of health care services for the children of Ireland.

Children in Hospital Ireland's programme of services and activities also includes:

- Provision of play and recreation by trained and vetted hospital **PlayWell** volunteers in 17 hospitals;
- Provision of a helping hand and information at CHI's **JustAsk** Hospital Help Desk at Crumlin;
- An office based information and advice service for parents and professionals;
- Delivery of education programmes aimed at school and college students, parents, and health and other professionals;
- An annual public lecture;
- Research relating to the needs of sick children and their parents;
- Awareness-raising projects.

Children in Hospital Ireland also offers a range of publications including Prepare Your Child For Hospital leaflet in 14 languages, guidelines, reports, submissions, information and education material.

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Submission to the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children's Rights

Introduction

Children in Hospital Ireland welcomes the commitment to holding a referendum to strengthen children's rights in the Constitution. The organisation also welcomes the opportunity to bring its position relating to health and health care rights to the attention of the members of the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment.

Children in Hospital Ireland is an active member of the Children's Rights Alliance and as such has contributed to and endorses fully the content of the Alliance's submission.

The views of Children in Hospital Ireland

Children in Hospital Ireland's submission reflects its concern that the constitutional amendment should enumerate express rights for children particularly in the area of health and health care provision.

In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and our National Children's and Health Strategies, Children in Hospital Ireland is committed to ensuring that the nation's children have the right to the best possible health and to the best possible services to ensure the attainment of health.

CHI believes this can only be achieved by including a specific clause in the proposed amendment enumerating this right.

In addition CHI would further urge that this clause would require the State to ensure that its relevant agencies take appropriate measures to ensure the attainment of a child's right to best possible health and health services.

Rationale

At present the delivery of health care services throughout the country is not governed by any guidelines. This results in the delivery of services which are inconsistent and not answerable to any standards.

In many instances children are only accepted in children's wards up to the age of 16 years (or even less in some cases). This results in children being inappropriately cared for in adult wards.

There is no obligation to ensure that staff caring for children are appropriately trained and qualified to enable them to respond to the physical, emotional and developmental needs of children.

A child does not have the right to have a parent or other familiar supportive adult with him or her when in hospital. When parents are with their child in hospital often they are not supported in this task.

Children do not have the right to have their voices heard in health care settings. Neither do they have the right to information on their care and treatment.

Children do not have the right to be treated in with appropriate tact and understanding, respecting their privacy, to ensure their physical and emotional stress is minimised.

Children do not have the right to vital play, recreation and education while in hospital. These facilities are minimal to non-existent in many hospitals.

Conclusion

The above needs are but an indication of how the rights of sick children are not met. Children in Hospital Ireland urges the members of the Joint Committee to favour the inclusion of expressed rights for children including the right to the best health and the highest standard of health care services possible. The organisation would welcome an opportunity to make an oral presentation to the members of the Joint Committee and is available to supply further information or clarification on any aspects of this submission.

Children in Hospital Ireland thanks the members of the Joint Committee for their time and consideration of this submission.

**Mary O'Connor, Chief Executive
Children in Hospital Ireland, January 2008**

Appendices – Separate Attachments

- 1 The European Charter for Children in Hospital, the EACH Charter**
- 2 Guidelines for the Care of Children with Special Needs in Hospital**
- 3 Sick Children, Money Worries**
- 4 Overview of the work of Children in Hospital Ireland**