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Council of Europe  
May - November 2022

Présidence de l'Irlande  
Conseil de l'Europe  
Mai - Novembre 2022

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



## Practical Information Note

**“Hear Our Voices: The Rights and Determination of the Best interests of the Child in Parental Separation and in Care Proceedings”**

*3rd-5th October 2022*

*Farmleigh House*

*Phoenix Park*

*Dublin, Ireland*



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
Department of Justice



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# 1. General Information

## 1.1 Introduction

We are pleased to announce the conference **“Hear Our Voices: The Rights and Determination of the Best interests of the Child in Parental Separation and in Care Proceedings”** will take place on 3 October 2022 in Farmleigh House, Dublin, Ireland.

This Conference is organised by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in close collaboration with the Council of Europe and the Department of Justice. The Conference objective is to examine how to determine and promote the rights, voice and best interests of the child and young person in the context of parental separation and care proceedings.

This objective ties in with the priorities of the Irish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. It also builds on the recently launched Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027), which includes the strategic objectives of

- Child-friendly justice for all children and
- Giving a voice to every child.

This Conference is timely in terms of significant developments in Ireland, such as the upcoming Family Justice Strategy and Guardian ad litem reform, and will be an occasion to share developments and best practice in Ireland and in Member States and to generate a stimulating debate to provide input to the 6th meeting of the Group of Experts on the best interest of the Child in parental separation and in care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE).

This is a special opportunity to bring together young people, policy-makers, national authorities and other experts to exchange views.

**Both events (conference and hearing) will be organised in a hybrid format – attendance in person and on line will both be available.**



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## 1.2 Format of the conference

The conference takes place on Monday, 3 October 2022 in Farmleigh House, Dublin and is organised by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth with the Council of Europe and input from the Department of Justice. The conference will be followed by the hearing and the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on the best interest of the Child in parental separation and in care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE).

### Alignment with domestic priorities

It is a particularly opportune time for this conference as there are a number of significant reforms under way in Ireland which should transform the care system and family justice system in this jurisdiction.

The General Scheme of the Family Court Bill proposes to establish a unified Family Court comprising District, Circuit and High Court divisions. In addition, the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee established the Family Justice Oversight Group (FJOG) to agree a high-level vision and key medium and longer-term objectives for the development of a national family justice system having regard to international best practice, in parallel with the establishment of a dedicated Family Court structure. The Minister for Justice is planning to publish the finalised Family Court Bill and Ireland's first Family Justice Strategy in 2022.

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is also leading significant reform of child care proceedings through reform of and modernisation the major piece of legislation governing the conduct of child care proceedings. The Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022, which provides for reform of the guardian ad litem (GAL) system, was signed into law by the President on 19 July 2022. The passing of this legislation strengthens the voice of children in child-care proceedings and enables Minister O'Gorman to establish a new national GAL service within an Executive Office of the Department on an interim basis with a view to longer-term arrangements for the Office being made within the new specialised family justice system. The principal aim of the Office will be to offer a national GAL service that will provide a high quality, standardised service to all children and young people who are the subject of child care proceedings.

The work of the Group of Experts on the best interest of the Child in separation and placement proceedings is thus of particular relevance to Ireland at this exciting juncture and given the level of domestic interest in these key reforms, this event will highlight to a domestic audience the important work of the Group of Experts and of the CDCJ and the CDENF more generally.



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The theme of the conference is “Hear Our Voices: The Rights and Determination of the Best interests of the Child in Parental Separation and in Care Proceedings” with the focus on the voice of the child and young person in the determination of their best interests in care proceedings and family courts.

The objective of the conference is to inform attendees of developments in Ireland and give examples of best practice. We also hope to generate a stimulating debate that will provide input to the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on the best interest of the Child in parental separation and in care proceedings (CJ/ENF-ISE).



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### 1.3 Practical event information

Access to the conference venue requires a valid personalised badge which will be provided to you during the registration process in Farmleigh House. **Please ensure your badge is visible at all times during your visit to Farmleigh House and in the other official programme venues.** Access to the meeting venue will be denied in the absence of a visibly worn badge.

During the event, the venue will provide necessary services, such as a cloakroom and an open Internet connection for attendees (login details will be given on the personalised badge). There will also be tea/coffee refreshments upon arrival.

A light buffet lunch will be provided for all attendees on each day of the event with tea/coffee and refreshments served at numerous intervals throughout the day.

Simultaneous interpretation from English to French and French to English will be provided during the 3-day event.

Please note that NO interpretation will be provided during the Official Dinner in the National Museum Collins Barracks on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022.



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## 1.4 Conference Programme

### **“Hear Our Voices: The Rights and Determination of the Best interests of the Child in Parental Separation and in Care Proceedings”**

| Monday 3 October |   |
|------------------|---|
| 08:00-09:00      | Registration in Farmleigh House   |
|                  | Conference MC – Tanya Ward, CEO Children’s Rights Alliance  |
| 09:00-09:30      | Opening address by Minister Roderic O’Gorman TD, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth                         |
|                  | Address by Christophe Poirel, Director, Human Rights Directorate, Council of Europe   |
| 09:30-10:30      | <b>Hear my Voice</b><br>Keynote address by Lemn Sissay OBE<br>Fireside Chat with young people   |
| 10:30-11:00      | <i>Coffee Break</i>   |
| 11:00-12:00      | <b>Balancing rights</b>   |
| 12:00-13:20      | High-level plenary session 1 –<br><b>Assessing the rights and best interests of the child in the context of care proceedings</b>            |
| 13:20-14:50      | <i>Lunch Break</i>  |
| 14:50-15:20      | <b>Children’s view in developing future standards on child’s rights in family proceedings</b>   |
| 15:20-15:50      | <b>Evolution of the ‘Best interests of the child’ concept</b>   |
| 15:50-16:15      | <i>Coffee Break</i>   |
| 16:15-17:30      | High-level plenary session 2 –<br><b>The rights and best interests of the child in the context of parental separation and in family law</b> |
| 17:30-17:45      | Closing address by Minister Helen McEntee TD, Minister for Justice  |
| 18:00-21:00      | Conference dinner in National Museum Collins Barracks   |



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## 2. Registration

Attendees are invited to register their interest in attending this event through our dedicated registration page. Given the capacity limitations of the venue, a limited number of tickets for in person attendance are available with the option of online attendance available to all

**We ask domestic attendees to please register your interest for attendance by COB Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> September and request that international attendees register their interest by COB Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September via [this link](#).**

All successful domestic registrations will be informed by email by Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

Unsuccessful in-person attendance registrations will automatically receive a link via email to view the conference online.

**We appreciate those intending to travel internationally for this event will need to make travel arrangements. If this applies to you, please e-mail [Oct2022COE@equality.gov.ie](mailto:Oct2022COE@equality.gov.ie) with your details and your registration will be dealt with promptly.**

If you have any further queries in relation to registration, please email us at [Oct2022COE@equality.gov.ie](mailto:Oct2022COE@equality.gov.ie)



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### 3. Accommodation

The [Hendrick](#) Hotel is the official accommodation partner for the event. The hotel is located in Dublin 7 just off Smithfield Square on Hendrick Street, from where it draws its name. This cobblestoned quarter of Dublin is a City Centre neighbourhood renowned for Arts, Film, Theatre and Crafts.

**A discounted delegate rate has been negotiated with the hotel for those attending the event.**

**For more information or to make a booking, please click [here](#).**

**All attendees staying at The Hendrick Hotel will be able to avail of organised coach transport between the hotel and the conference venues.**

The Hendrick Smithfield  
6 – 11 Hendrick Street, Dublin 7, Ireland,  
D07 A8N1  
[+3531 482 6500](tel:+35314826500)  
[info@hendrickdublin.ie](mailto:info@hendrickdublin.ie)



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## 4. Useful travel information

Please note that attendees must make their own arrangements for travelling to and from Dublin airport.

➤ Travelling by Bus to and from Dublin Airport :

For information on buses to and from Dublin Airport to Dublin city centre please click [here](#)

➤ Travelling by taxi from Dublin Airport:

There is a taxi rank just outside Arrivals in Dublin Airport. You can expect to pay in the region of the following to take a taxi from:

- Dublin Airport to the Hendrick Hotel - €25
- Dublin Airport to City Centre - €25

Other taxi fares:

You can expect to pay in the region of the following to take a taxi from:

- Hendrick Hotel to Farmleigh House - €15
- City Centre to Farmleigh House - €20

➤ Travelling to the Conference

Public bus

If travelling by public bus from Dublin city centre to Farmleigh House take Dublin Bus number 37 from the city centre (visit [Dublin Bus](#) for more information), and get off at the Castleknock Gate.

Enter the Phoenix Park and take the narrow pedestrian pathway through the field to your immediate right.

Walk down this path until you reach a road.

Turn right and you should see the gates of Farmleigh a short distance away.

Farmleigh is a fifteen minute walk from the Castleknock Gate

Travelling by car:

**Please do not follow Sat Nav or Google Map directions to Farmleigh Estate, as these will not currently bring you to the correct location.** Instead, **please enter these coordinates: 53.3661, -6.3516.** Farmleigh is accessed from the interior of Phoenix Park.





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Driving directions are as follows:

*From City Centre:*

Enter Phoenix Park from the gated entrance on Parkgate Street, near Heuston Station. Continue on Chesterfield Avenue for approximately 3.6km until the third roundabout. Take the first exit at this roundabout. At 100 metres, turn right on to White's Road. Continue straight, and the entrance to Farmleigh will be in approximately 500 metres.

*From Castleknock:*

Enter Phoenix Park from the gated entrance on Castleknock Road. After going through the gate, take the third exit at the first roundabout. At 100 metres turn right onto White's Road. Continue straight, and the entrance to Farmleigh will be in approximately 500 metres.

Please note that cars cannot access Farmleigh by White's road via College Road / Carpenterstown Road.

For further information click here: [How To Find Us | Farmleigh House and Estate](#)

- All attendees staying at The Hendrick Hotel will be able to avail of organised coach transport between the hotel and the conference venues.



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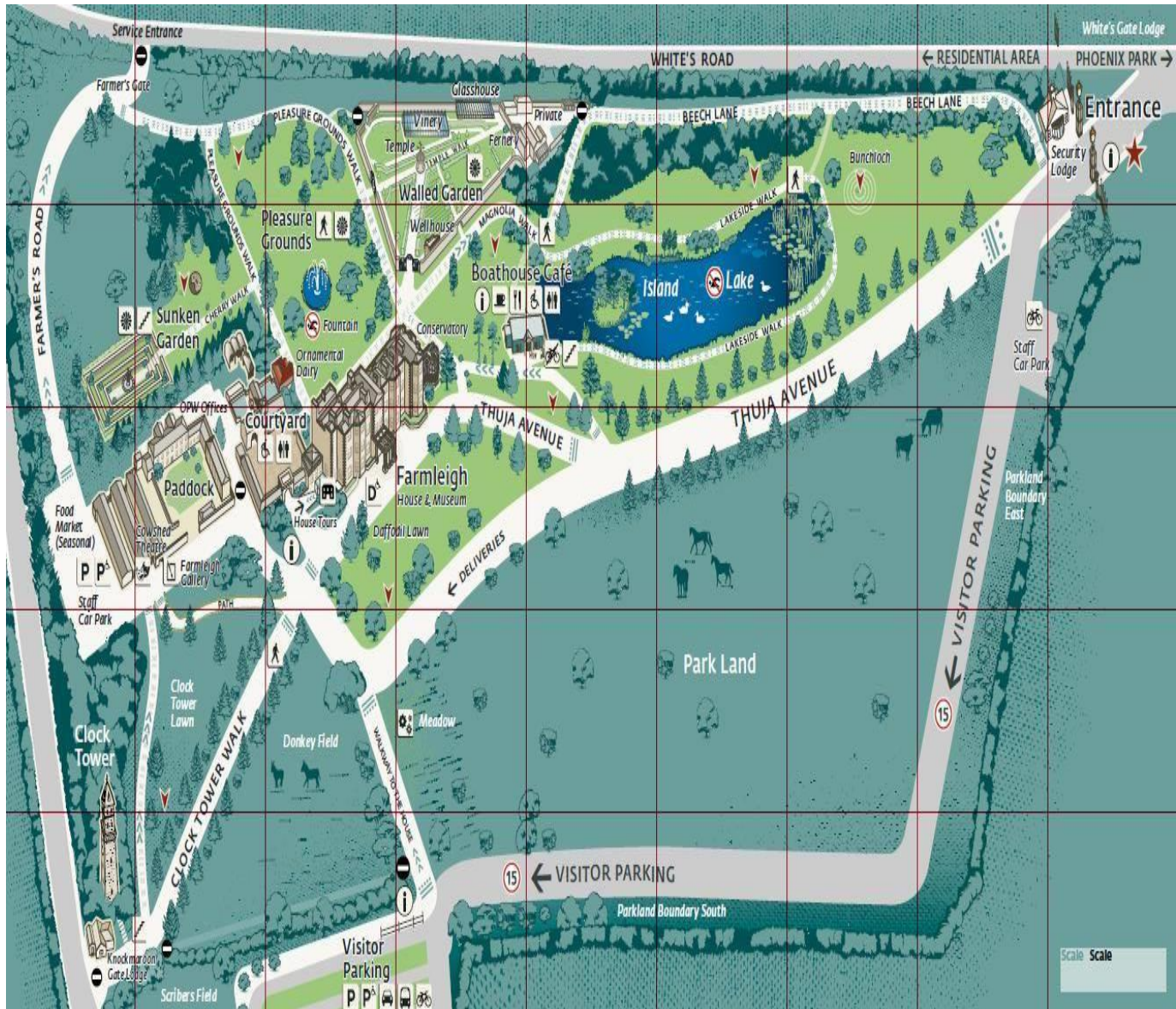
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## 4.1 Farmleigh House and Estate



Originally a small Georgian house built in the late eighteenth century, Farmleigh House and Estate was purchased by Edward Cecil Guinness (1847-1927) on his marriage to his cousin, Adelaide Guinness, in 1873. A great-grandson of Arthur Guinness, founder of the eponymous brewery, Edward Cecil became the first Earl of Iveagh in 1919. The first major building programme was undertaken in 1881-84 to designs by Irish architect James Franklin Fuller (1832-1925), who extended the House to the west, refurbished the existing house, and added a third storey.



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In 1896 the Ballroom wing was added, designed by the Scottish architect William Young (1843-1900). With the addition of a new Conservatory adjoining the Ballroom in 1901, and increased planting of broadleaves and exotics in the gardens, Farmleigh had, by the early years of the twentieth century, all the requisites for gracious living and stylish entertainment. Its great charm lies in the eclecticism of its interior decoration ranging from the classical style to Jacobean, Louis XV, Louis XVI and Georgian.

Farmleigh House and Estate was purchased from the Guinness family by the Irish Government in 1999 for €29.2m. The house has been carefully refurbished by the Office of Public Works as the premier accommodation for visiting dignitaries and guests of the nation, for high level Government meetings, and for public enjoyment.



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## 5. Official Conference Dinner on Monday 3 October 2022

The Official Conference Dinner will take place in the National Museum of Ireland, (Decorative Arts and History), Collins Barracks, Dublin on Monday 3 October 2022.

A welcome reception will take place at 18:00 followed by a buffet dinner and a tour of the Museum may be available, subject to numbers.

If you wish to attend the dinner, attendees are requested to indicate their intention to attend during the online registration process.

Please note that NO interpretation will be provided during the Official Conference Dinner.

**The National Museum of Ireland - Decorative Arts & History**  
**Collins Barracks, Benburb Street, Dublin 7, D07 XKV4**  
**+353 1 677 7444**

Collins Barracks was an army base for 200 years before being renovated for use as a museum. The network of tall granite-faced buildings occupy an 18 acre site and retain an imposing military air.

The site boasts a rich and varied history. Completed in 1704, it played an important role suppressing uprisings over the centuries. Wolfe Tone, the founder and leading member of the United Irishmen, was court martialled and imprisoned here after the 1798 Rebellion. During the 1916 Easter Rising, troops based here tackled rebel positions on Usher's Island, at the Four Courts, and in the GPO. Perhaps the clearest historical link is in the site's name. Collins Barracks is named after Michael Collins, the first Commander-in-Chief of the Irish Free State Army. He had previously displayed heroic leadership during the 1920-21 War of Independence, only to be assassinated in 1922, during the Irish Civil War, aged just 31. In modern day Ireland, Collins occupies legendary status.

Today, this former military barracks is home to two fascinating and completely diverse collections. Decorative arts encompasses silver, ceramics, glassware, furniture, clothing, jewellery and coins while the military history collection tells of Ireland's military and revolutionary past.



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## 6. Public Health Measures

To ensure the safe conduct of the Conference, the rules minimising the spread of COVID-19 will be set in a way to reduce the risks potentially jeopardising the event. All present should observe basic hygiene measures during conference (hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene). In case of worsening of the epidemiological situation, any significant changes in preventive measures will be notified in advance.

Current information on measures within Ireland can be found here: [Public Health Advice](#)



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## 7. Irish Presidency of the Council of Europe

For the website of the Irish Presidency of the Council of Europe, please click [here](#).

It contains information on all topics related to the Presidency available in Irish, English and French.

The website also encompasses a lot of useful information, including:

- The priorities of the Irish Presidency;
- Calendar of events;
- Latest news and press releases
- Relevant contacts and links

### Social media

All content related to the Irish Presidency is available on twitter account below:

[@IrishRepCoE](#)



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## 8. Additional Information

If you have any questions regarding your attendance at the conference, please contact the team by email at [Oct2022COE@equality.gov.ie](mailto:Oct2022COE@equality.gov.ie)

- ❖ Emergency telephone number: 999 (police, fire brigade, ambulance)
- ❖ Plugs: Three prong outlet
- ❖ Electricity: The voltage in Ireland is 230V, 50 Hz.
- ❖ Local time: Irish Standard Time (IST) UTC +1
- ❖ Country code: Ireland +353
- ❖ Currency: Euro

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth conference organisation team are:

- ❖ Éimear O'Brien Mobile: +353 (0) 87 1849626
- ❖ Deirdre Reidy
- ❖ David Lennon



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