

## Seminar 20: Youth and Homelessness (Floor -2, Room 11)

Chair: Freek Spinnewijn, BE

**Grainne McKenna and Geraldine Scanlon, IE:** The Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness in Dublin, Ireland



*Dr Geraldine Scanlon is an Assistant Professor in Psychology and Education in the School of Human Development. She has significant experience of national and international collaboration on studies that explore and support the inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in mainstream education. Dr Scanlon's recent work with UNICEF (2022), the National Disability Authority (2019) and the Children's Rights Alliance (2018) has focused on human rights-based approaches to education and development, especially for seldom heard voices and marginalised groups. A core element of her work is ethical research and innovation that facilitates the voice of children and vulnerable populations.*

*Grainne McKenna is an Assistant Professor at Dublin City University, Institute of Education with a specialist teaching interest in early childhood, special educational needs and teacher-child relationships. Grainne has worked as a primary school teacher and Developmental and Educational Psychologist. Grainne has special research interests in children's rights and social justice. She has been involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating several initiatives to support better outcomes for children and families. Grainne has recently undertaken research on the needs of children experiencing homelessness (Children's Rights Alliance, 2018) and the educational experiences of young men experiencing homelessness (Peter McVerry Trust, 2019).*



Access to education is enshrined in the Irish Constitution (Article 42), and further recognised by the State's signature and ratification of the UNCRC in 1992. Despite this, the phenomenon of family homelessness is having a detrimental impact on children's participation and development of rights. In Ireland, children and their families are the largest and fastest growing group experiencing homelessness; children and their parents account for over 60 per cent of the officially recorded homeless population. Homelessness is damaging and disruptive to children's lives, and schools and educational services across Ireland are lacking supports and systems to respond to the educational needs of children living in homeless accommodation. This study explored how living in emergency accommodation effects children's access and participation in education from the perspective of parents, principals, teachers and educational professionals. A mixed-method research design was adopted, this included; interviews with parents of children experiencing homelessness, a survey of educational professionals working in primary and post-primary schools, and semi structured interviews with school principals, teachers, home-school liaison officers and early childhood professionals working directly with children experiencing homelessness. The findings indicate that homelessness is having a detrimental impact on children's lives resulting in significant educational inequality. Children experiencing homelessness have a unique profile of need and set of challenges not accounted for previously within the Irish education system. The study provides meaningful insight into the cumulative risk homelessness poses to children's education and provides recommendations for the development of policies, practices and procedures that promote educational access and the enactment of children's right to education in Ireland.



**Peter Mackie, UK:** Preventing Homelessness: Moving Upstream

*Peter is a Professor at Cardiff University. The primary focus of Peter's research and advisory work is homelessness prevention. His work has had considerable impact, including the development of new legislation and practice in multiple countries. He was the academic lead on the Welsh Government's Homelessness Action Group and is currently a member of the International Advisory Board for the Canadian Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab (Making the Shift), and an Editor for the International Journal*

*on Homelessness.*

In the UK, as in many other European countries, first experiences of homelessness often occur as a child or young person. Recognising this fact, and in response to calls for homelessness prevention efforts to move further upstream – ahead of crisis point – a school-based intervention is being piloted in Wales, drawing on lessons from the seminal Geelong Project in Australia. This presentation reports on the development and first year of implementation of Upstream Cymru. It tracks the challenges of adapting a universal screening tool for the Welsh context; developing collaborations between services, schools and academia; and the dilemmas of implementing a school-based intervention through a pandemic. Drawing on new survey data collected during the pilot, and linked education and homelessness administrative data, the presentation will both confirm and contradict many long-standing assumptions about who is most at risk of becoming homeless and what this means for effective early intervention.