

## State is failing in duty to children - AGSI

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The State is failing 'miserably' in its duty under the Constitution to 'cherish all the children equally' in relation to children at risk, states the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) in a submission to the review of Youth Justice currently underway in the Department of Justice.

"We make this statement in the light of a number of matters which have been of concern to the association and its members for many years and which have been brought to the attention of Government departments repeatedly down those years," said the President of AGSI, Mr Joe Dirwan.

He specified that the main issues of concern were:

children, from babies to teenagers, still had to be looked after in garda stations in the absence of other child-protection facilities at certain times

there is a need for a range of measures to protect children from harm by irresponsible parents and guardians

there should be a specific offence of corrupting a child to deal with 'Fagin-like' situations

there needs to be a revamp of the Juvenile Liaison Service to reduce paperwork and improve efficiency.

"We look forward to the New Year in the hope that at least some, if not all of the concerns expressed in our submission will be taken on board and reflected in legislation and other measures soon," said Mr Dirwan. "Our members on the front line feel that we need to take extra special measures to protect children at risk sooner rather than later."