



Pre-Budget Submission 2025



empowering people in care

Summary of Measures

- ① Fund and implement a National Strategy on Alternative Care that includes measures to:

Increase the number of foster and residential care homes and end the use of Special Emergency Arrangements (SEAs).

Address the shortage of Special Care placements:

- Provide emergency funding so Special Care facilities can be staffed to operate at full capacity.
- Re-establish step-down placements for children leaving Special Care.

Enhance interagency cooperation so care-experience is not a disadvantage.

Expand the number of social workers across alternative care.



- ② Increase public funding of independent advocacy services for care-experienced children and young people.



- ③ Reduce reliance on private residential providers and ensure they are inspected independently

- Invest in publicly operated children's residential care homes.
- Mandate and fund HIQA to inspect all children's residential care homes.



- ④ Act on care leaver homelessness

- Secure 100 homes for young people leaving state care in 2025.
- Invest based on yearly projected need for care-leavers.

About EPIC (Empowering People in Care)

EPIC Empowering People in Care (EPIC) is an independent organisation that works with and for children who are currently living in state care and young people who have care experience. This includes those in relative care, foster care, and residential care (including high support and special care) as well as children accommodated by the state under section 5 of the Child Care Act, 1991, and those sentenced or remanded by the Courts. EPIC also works with young people who are preparing to leave care and in aftercare services, and with young adults with care experience.

EPIC's Advocacy Service works to enable these children and young people to have their views and concerns heard and taken seriously, to empower them to speak for themselves, to help to resolve the issues and challenges they experience in care, to assist them in accessing the services and resources they need, and to bring about positive change in their experience of care and their lives generally.

EPIC makes this submission to Government in both our capacity as a children rights organisation, and on behalf of the children in care and young people leaving care with whom we work. Our submission is informed by policy development undertaken by EPIC, which seeks to create positive change in the care system at a systemic level, using the evidence base from our National Advocacy Service caseload.

Introduction

The Government of Ireland has a statutory responsibility for children in state care and young people leaving care, which is bound by national legislation and international conventions including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This responsibility necessitates ensuring their safety, well-being, and development, as well as promoting their rights and best interests. When the state acts in loco parentis, it has an obligation to act as any reasonable parent would.

In 2023, the main presenting issues for which children in care sought advocacy from EPIC were in relation to their care placement and access to supports and services, indicating that the needs of some children in care are not being met robustly. ¹ Care placement-based cases often involve children who had no placement or wished to move to a placement more appropriate to them. Cases involving access to services often relate to children being unable to access

therapeutic supports for mental health or disabilities. There was also an increase during this period in children without an allocated social worker.^{2 3} Consequently, 20% of children in care were without an up-to-date care plan, according to Tusla statistics.⁴

Additionally, the state is obligated to facilitate a smooth transition for young people leaving care, offering necessary supports and services to empower them towards independence. However, 22% of the young people that sought support from EPIC's Advocacy Service during 2023 were experiencing homelessness.⁵ This reflects not only the impact of the housing crisis on young people with care experience but also a lack of effective provision of housing by the state for this cohort.

Each of these issues, as well as issues described further in this submission, impact the welfare and protection of children and young people with experience of state care.

EPIC believe that the issues highlighted in our submission and the measures we propose in Budget 2025 to address them can result in timely, effective, and quality investments to ensure the rights of children in care and care-experienced young people are upheld.

1. Fund and Implement a National Strategy on Alternative Care

In recent years, a range of challenges have emerged in the Irish care system, as highlighted by various stakeholders. In July 2023 a letter Government Ministers, outgoing Judge Dermot Simms expressed "utmost concern" for the welfare of children in state.⁶ In response to Justice Simms comments, CEO of Tusla, Ms. Kate Duggan, emphasised that the Agency is at a "crisis point".⁷ This crisis has contributed to a rise in usage of 'Special Emergency Arrangements' (SEAs). SEAs are emergency settings where a child is accommodated in unregulated or non-procured placements such as properties that are not registered by Tusla, privately leased properties, or hospitality settings.⁸

In EPIC's view, the current crisis can be attributed to three main factors:

- An insufficient number of available, regulated, and appropriate placements for children in care.
- An inadequate level of interagency cooperation by government departments and state agencies mandated to support children in care, including their transition to adulthood.
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified staff, particularly social workers, and social care workers, across the alternative care system.

Ending the crisis in children’s care placements and use of Special Emergency Arrangements (SEAs)

Tusla has outlined plans to bolster placement availability through strategic plans for residential and foster care services.^{9 10} Tusla have recently acquired nine properties for residential care use, as increasing capacity has been inhibited due to staffing issues.^{11 12} There has also been a decrease in children in foster care placements since the publication of the strategic plan for foster care, which has been attributed to a lack of support, consistent staffing, and access to therapeutic services.^{13 14} There has also been a decrease in available special care placements, due to staffing issues.¹⁵

It is important to note that, currently, the Tusla strategic plans are the sole policy direction for building placement capacity, with Minister O’Gorman recently stating that these plans form the basis for ending use of SEAs.¹⁶ However, Tusla have sought further policy direction on alternative care from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).¹⁷

Additionally, there is a growing reliance on the private sector to address the placement crisis. This is despite it being a policy objective of both the Government and Tusla to reduce the reliance on private provision of children’s residential care. Over the last five years, the number of children being placed with private providers has grown from 1 in 9 to 1 in 6.¹⁸ In EPIC’s view, this is an obstacle to providing a stable and sustainable care system. In Budget 2024, Minister O’Gorman announced a €101million increase in core funding to Tusla for the purposes of bolstering care placements amongst other purposes.¹⁹ In the same year, more than €70million was spent on SEAs alone.²⁰

Address the shortage of Special Care placements

Special care is defined by Tusla as “short term, stabilising and safe care in a secured therapeutic environment”.²¹ The aim of special care programmes is to provide an individualised programme of support and therapeutic interventions to help stabilise a child and enable them to move to a mainstream care placement that will meet their needs. An initial order for special care can be granted by the High Court for three month and up to a maximum of nine months.²²

However, this nine-month period is often extended, due to a lack of appropriate onward placements for the child.²³ The OCO recently reported that private providers, which operate a

majority of residential care units, were reluctant to offer follow-on placements to children leaving special care.²⁴ In May, it was reported in the High Court that a child had to be sent to the UK as no special care placement was available in Ireland.²⁵

In recent years, the capacity of special care has come under renewed focus. Currently, there are three special care facilities in Ireland: Ballydowd and Crannóg Nua in Dublin and Coovagh House in Limerick, with a combined total capacity of twenty-six beds.²⁶ However, due primarily to staffing issues, the current maximum occupancy in special care in Ireland is fifteen beds.²⁷

In February 2024, the Supreme Court dismissed Tusla's appeal against the ruling of special care Orders for two teenagers - a male and female.²⁸ Tusla's appeal was based on the agency having no special care placements available due to severe staff shortages. Furthermore, the Court concluded that the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011, which established special care as a statutory requirement, implied a commitment to provide necessary funding for such care. This issue has been repeatedly raised in court hearings, with Judges expressing frustration and concern about the systemic failure to address it adequately. As noted by Judges reviewing these cases, "we cannot leave children in special care indefinitely when they deserve to be out of special care" and another stating special care was being used as a holding facility and concern that children are becoming institutionalised from their length of time in special care.²⁹

The OCO also noted that special care staff told them the lack of placements is exacerbated by the lack of appropriate 'step-down' placements. Prior to 2014, when a child left special care (when the order expired or they were discharged), the child usually transitioned into a 'step-down' placement.³⁰ However, the last such high-support facility closed ten years ago.³¹ Tusla's Strategic Plan for Residential Care Services for Children and Young People 2022-2025 proposed the creation of two new step-down facilities with a total of seven beds, one in Limerick (planned for Q4 2022) and one in Dublin (planned for Q4 2024) which would promote timely discharges from special care.³² They have yet to come on-stream.

EPIC believe that given the critical function special care holds in providing support and stability to some of the State's most vulnerable children, the current situation of running at half capacity needs urgent attention. The 11 beds currently unoccupied need sufficient staffing to bringing them into use. Furthermore, additional measures need to be made to ensure that children have appropriate follow-on placements from special care that meet their needs.

Enhanced interagency cooperation so care-experience is not a disadvantage.

As mentioned, there is an onus on many state departments and agencies to uphold their statutory responsibility for these children and young people. However, across several policy areas, there is a clear disparity in outcomes between children and young people with experience of state care and their peers:

Education: In 2023, the CSO released a dataset indicating that children in care and young people leaving care have poorer educational outcomes when compared with their peers, on every level and metric.³³ A report by the ESRI found that poorer educational outcomes were due to a lack of robust guidance on inter-agency cooperation and coordination.³⁴ In 2022, young people with care experience were recognised for the first time as a priority group in the National Access Plan 2022-2027 due to their lower participation in higher education and high rate of attrition.³⁵

Housing: Young people leaving state care are recognised in the Government's Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023-25 due to their "disproportionate presentations" to homeless services.³⁶ It attributes this to 'organisational disjunctures' between the relevant state agencies.³⁷ Homeless charities have noted the increase in care leavers accessing their services, with Focus Ireland noting that one in ten of the care leavers with whom they work in Dublin are homeless, while another 18% are in insecure accommodation and at risk of homelessness.³⁸

Justice: The Youth Justice Strategy 2021 – 2027 states that better interagency cooperation is needed to counteract the involvement of children in state care in the criminal justice system and acknowledges their systematic disadvantage.³⁹ A recent study by UCD's Sexual Exploitation Research Programme (SERP) found that gangs are targeting children in state care for sexual exploitation. The research also highlights a lack of appropriate cooperation amongst key stakeholders in preventing abuse.⁴⁰

Health: The Young Ireland Framework 2023-2028 outlines the difficulties and inadequate service provision for children in care seeking to access therapeutic supports.⁴¹ EPIC's Advocacy Service have noted this is particularly prominent for those in need of disability services, particularly when transitioning to aftercare and adult services.⁴² The Service further notes that children are often caught 'in limbo' between agencies such as Tusla and the Health Service

Executive (HSE). This is despite a Joint Protocol being in place between the two agencies on effective cooperation.⁴³ The Ombudsperson for Children (OCO) has flagged that inconsistent thresholds between the HSE and Tusla on what defines a moderate to severe disability remains an issue.⁴⁴ EPIC has found that interagency issues also arise when children require access to therapeutic services for mental health and specialist services, including for addiction or eating disorders.

While the above strategies, as well as potential legislative measures, oblige state agencies to cooperate better with Tusla, the state still lacks a focused, coordinated effort to ensure the needs of children in care and young people leaving care are met.⁴⁵

Measures to increase the number of social workers across alternative care

Underlying the above crisis is the difficulty of Tusla to recruit and retain staff at adequate levels, particularly social workers. Tusla estimates that 500 social workers are needed for recruitment across all sectors in Ireland each year. There are currently only 200 new graduates each year.⁴⁶ EPIC has noted that these difficulties can often culminate in negative outcomes for children awaiting allocation - children may have multiple social workers coming in and out of their lives over a brief period and may experience delayed or reduced attention to their care. This can mean a care plan not being in place or child in care review being delayed. This can impact on the child's education, health, family access, or placement. According to the latest Tusla statistics, 20% of children in care did not have an up-to-date care plan in place, and 17% had no allocated social worker.⁴⁷

Tusla has undertaken various actions to rectify this situation and to improve its staffing, including converting temporary agency staff to Tusla contracts, offering employment to all final-year social work students, and engaging with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) to increase the number of places on college courses.⁴⁸ Most recently Tusla developed an apprenticeship with UCC to support graduates to work towards a master's degree while gaining paid practical experience.⁴⁹

While these actions are necessary and welcome, it was noted by DPER in 2020 that the short supply of social work graduates is creating the workforce challenge.⁵⁰ The chairperson of the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) noted that resolving recruitment and retention issues requires a cross-departmental approach. This is due to social workers being employed across a

range of critical roles and service areas.⁵¹ These include health, mental health, disability, child protection and welfare, elderly care, criminal justice, and housing, among others. As a result, no single Minister, department, or agency has overarching responsibility for strategic workforce planning of social work services.

In summary, EPIC believe that a whole of government approach is needed on alternative care if the state is to uphold its responsibilities and statutory obligations. The current crisis cannot be resolved by DCEDIY or Tusla alone. Tusla is a statutory agency that is subject to an annual budget and cannot coordinate policy, activity planning on a governmental or departmental level. Other departments or agencies often hold the necessary mandates and resources to resolve the challenges in the alternative care system in Ireland. Therefore, both DCEDIY and Tusla are often reliant on other arms of the state to discharge their duties to children in care and young care-leavers. The Government must produce and implement a whole of government strategy on alternative care with tangible actions that all relevant departments and agencies are accountable to.

EPIC urges the Government in Budget 2025 to:

- **Initiate a National Strategy on Alternative Care, which will:**
 - **Use state resources to resolve the crisis in available placements, in all settings including a roadmap ending the use of SEAs;**
 - **Provide funding to incentivise additional staff to Special Care and return all three centres to full capacity.**
 - **Invest in the reestablishment of step-down facilities providing Tusla with specific ringfenced additional funding for this purpose.**
 - **Establish more robust interagency practice so that children and young people are not at a disadvantage of having experience in care; and**
 - **Commence workforce planning on social work, on a governmental level, to gain sufficient numbers in alternative care.**

2. Increase public funding of independent advocacy for care-experienced children and young people

EPIC provides a direct 1:1 advocacy service to enable children in care and young people with care experience to have their views and concerns heard, empowering them to speak for themselves, resolving issues, and helping them obtain the supports and services they need during their childhood or transition to adulthood.

While the right of children in care to be heard in decisions that affect them is well established in international law (such as the UNCRC), how this is upheld in Ireland requires development. In April 2023, DCEDIY published the General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023 confirming, amongst other areas, its intention to legislate for the voice of the child to be strengthened in decisions taken outside the court setting and in relation to their care. Its intention is to introduce a legal principle that children should be able to participate in the decision-making process.⁵² However, it remains unclear what practical elements will be resourced to ensure this principle is upheld.

EPIC see this proposal as an opportunity to truly implement the recommendations of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the “Ryan Report”) to ensure that children in state care have access to an independent professional with whom they can confide.⁵³ Currently, access to a professional, that is upheld in legislation, is limited to children in care during legal proceedings via a *Guardian Ad Litem*. However, legal proceedings only constitute one part of the decision-making in relation to a child’s care. Additionally, 57% of care arrangements are voluntary admissions, which are not subject to oversight by the Courts.⁵⁴

Independent advocacy for children in care is a powerful tool for upholding their rights. By ensuring that children have a voice and representation, Advocates help protect and promote a wide range of rights.

In the context of the existing challenges in the alternative care system, EPIC has seen demand for our National Advocacy Service increase by 33% over the last five years.⁵⁵ EPIC Advocates are often acting at the coalface of crises in alternative care. They witness how the delay in achieving better outcomes for children in care plays out, such as the inability to find an appropriate placement, changes in social work departments, insufficient social worker numbers and lengthy waiting times for legal proceedings and state services.

EPIC Advocates further work with children and young people to resolve issues in their lives that result from wider social challenges , such as the housing and cost of living crises and the ongoing global displacement crisis.

At EPIC, we believe that independent advocacy services can and should support statutory authorities in effectively meeting their duties to children in care. Such support improves not only children's experiences within the care system, but also their outcomes beyond care.

However, independent advocacy must be properly resourced to ensure that quality and effective support is readily accessible to those who need it.

EPIC urges the Government in Budget 2025 to:

- **Increase public funding directed to independent advocacy for children in care and young care-leavers where the level of need is high and where Advocates can resolve many issues confronting over-stretched social work and aftercare**

3. Reduce reliance on private residential care providers and ensure they are inspected independently

There is a growing reliance on the private sector to provide placements in the care system in Ireland, particularly in children's residential care.

Residential care is an important part of the Irish care system, where children who cannot be accommodated in foster care can be placed and supported in an appropriate environment which meets their needs. Tusla states that most children placed in residential care are there due to their behaviour being too challenging to be managed in any other care setting.⁵⁶ EPIC is also aware of children being placed in these settings due to a lack of available alternative placements, such as foster care or special care, on a transitional basis.

According to the latest Tusla statistics, 63% of children in residential care are placed with private providers.⁵⁷ The remaining 37% of children are placed in either Tusla-operated residential care homes or homes operated by the community and voluntary sector.

As mentioned, it is Government policy to bolster the level of publicly owned residential care centres to counteract the growing dependency of private providers.⁵⁸ The strategy to do so is outlined in Tusla's Strategic Plan for Residential Care 2022-2025, which proposes to increase public residential capacity by an additional 110 beds to ensure a ratio of 50:50 public:private provision by 2025, from the 60:40 provision in January 2022.⁵⁹

Since the inception of this plan, just nine Tusla-operated residential care homes are in the process of being brought into use by Q2 2025.⁶⁰ The CEO of Tusla, Ms. Kate Duggan, has noted that the delays in opening such centres can be attributed to staffing.⁶¹

While EPIC acknowledges that there are appropriate and well run private residential care homes, there are inherent risks in relying on a precarious private market and commodified care for some the nation's most vulnerable children. As noted by the OCO, the ability of private care homes to refuse children based on their complex needs is concerning, making those children vulnerable to being placed in special emergency arrangements.⁶² An internal Tusla audit of private residential care homes in June 2022 highlighted high staff turnover, causing disruption in children's lives.⁶³ Lastly, EPIC has noted several instances whereby privately run care homes were not deemed commercially viable and were closed at short notice, having a destabilising effect on the children who reside there.

Private providers are not inspected or regulated to the same standards as Tusla-operated residential care homes. Tusla-operated homes are regulated by HIQA and must demonstrate compliance with the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres (2018). In contrast, private providers are inspected by Tusla, who are also responsible for commissioning and paying for the service. This constitutes a conflict of interest, which was noted publicly by the previous CEO of Tusla, Mr. Bernard Gloster.⁶⁴ As evidenced in the many media reports on SEAs and private operators more broadly over the past year, the need for consistent, robust, independent oversight of children's care is crucial. It is important to note that both HIQA and Tusla favour broadening HIQA's remit to include the inspection of privately-operated residential care homes.^{65 66}

Along with the additional funding that would be required to resource HIQA to register and inspect privately operated children's residential care, amendments to the Health Act 2007 would be required to designate of private and community and voluntary run centres within HIQA's remit. According to a PQ reply from 2019, the then-Minister for Children and Youth Affairs said that drafting was underway on these amendments, but no progress has been made to date.

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In conclusion, EPIC believe that publicly owned residential care provides the most sustainable and stable environment for children who require residential care. By investing in additional capacity in Tusla operated centres, and reducing reliance on for-profit providers, a more equitable and supportive care system can be achieved.

EPIC urges the Government in Budget 2025 to:

- **Support Tusla with additional funding to acquire properties and recruit staff to deliver an increased number of publicly run residential homes to achieve a ratio of 50:50 public:private provision in 2025, as identified in Tusla's Strategic Plan on Residential Care.**
- **Provide HIQA with additional funding to inspect all residential care homes, as**

4. Act on care leaver homelessness

Of the young people that engaged with EPIC's Advocacy Service in 2023, one in five were experiencing homelessness. ⁶⁸ In EPIC's view, this highlights the acute nature of the housing crisis and its impact on young people leaving state care. Across jurisdictions, care leavers are seen as a cohort that is more vulnerable to homelessness. Due to often having less resources, and often no family or community supports to fall back on, they can quickly fall into precarious circumstances. Therefore, it is good practice that Government to remedies these challenges through tailored housing support programmes.

This is recognised in Ireland in the 'Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023-2025' which identifies care-leavers as a priority group and recognises that they are disproportionately represented in the young homeless population. ⁶⁹

In EPIC's view, given the small numbers of those who 'age out' of care at 18 years of age (around five hundred young people annually), the prevention of homelessness amongst care leavers should be achievable regardless of housing pressure. ⁷⁰ Not all care leavers are at risk of homelessness, as some receive further support from foster carers and the majority have access to aftercare services that can assist them to secure stable housing. Therefore, the small numbers who are at high risk could have this risk mitigated by robust forward-planning and effective interagency cooperation between Tusla and local authorities, as a part of a young person's aftercare planning while they are still in care.

In EPIC's experience of working with care leavers affected by the housing crisis, we can attest to the positive but limited successes of the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), which is funded by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. The CAS for Care Leavers Scheme has allowed Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs), Tusla and local authorities to collaborate and acquire numerous properties for care leavers at risk of homelessness. In the context of the

Youth Homelessness Strategy, DCEDIY commissioned a review of the CAS for Care Leavers Scheme.⁷¹ The review stated that the scheme had significant success in reaching its objectives and “should be expanded to meet the levels of projected need for this type of accommodation among young people leaving care”.

According to departmental data, 18 housing authorities have not availed of the scheme since 2020 and 13 have not availed of the scheme since the start of 2018.⁷² The average cost of acquiring properties in 2023 was €204,328.⁷³ The review of the CAS for Care Leavers Scheme outlines the difficulties in acquiring properties within the scheme and relying on under-resourced AHBs and local authorities.

EPIC believes that the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Tusla should work collaboratively to measure the housing need amongst young people leaving care per annum and specific funding should be provided for this. In Budget 2025, the state should aim to acquire 100 additional properties for this scheme, as a first measure.

EPIC urges the Government in Budget 2025 to:

- **Support local authorities and AHBs to acquire 100 properties nationally, specifically for the purposes of the CAS for Care Leavers Scheme in 2025.**
- **Provide further investment in the following years based upon the projected housing need for those leaving care.**



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- ¹ Data taken from forthcoming EPIC National Advocacy Service Report 2023.
- ² Tusla, Monthly Service Performance and Activity Report, January 2023, pg.12.
- ³ Tusla, Monthly Service Performance and Activity Report, January 2024, pg.12.
- ⁴ Tusla, Monthly Service Performance and Activity Report, March 2024, pg.12.
- ⁵ 69 of the 310 young people with whom EPIC Advocates worked in 2023. Data taken from forthcoming EPIC National Advocacy Service Report 2023.
- ⁶ Child Law Project, 2023 Reports - Volume 1 - Letter from District Court Judge Dermot Simms.
- ⁷ Baker, N (17 July 2023), 'Tusla at 'crisis point' after concern raised over 'systemic' shortcomings' (breakingnews.ie).
- ⁸ Child Law Project, 2023 Reports - Volume 1 – Introduction.
- ⁹ Tusla Strategic Plan for Residential Care Services for Children and Young People 2022-2025.
- ¹⁰ Tusla Strategic Plan for Foster Care Services for Children and Young People 2022-2025.
- ¹¹ Byrne, L (9 May 2024) 'Babies in State care placed in private unregulated settings' (rte.ie).
- ¹² Houses of the Oireachtas, Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth – 'General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023: Discussion' (9 May 2023).
- ¹³ 5,219 children were in foster care at the time of publication (July 2022). 5,042 children were in foster care in the latest Tusla statistics (March 2024). The 2024 figures included separated children seeking international protection, whereas the 2022 figures do not include them in statistics.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. n.10, pgs. 33, 36 & 39.
- ¹⁵ Houses of the Oireachtas, Committee on Public Accounts – 'Financial Statements 2022 - Tusla-Child and Family Agency' (29 Feb 2023).
- ¹⁶ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (9 April 2024), Written answers. PQ Ref No. 14731/24.
- ¹⁷ Tusla submission to consultation on DCEDIY Statement of Strategy 2023-25. Available at: www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/279181/4305ccb0-05d5-41fa-837f-3477d0fc969e.pdf#page=null.
- ¹⁸ 646 children of the 6005 in Tusla care in March 2019 were in the care of private providers, whereas 891 of the 5760 children were also in March 2024. Data taken from relevant Tusla Monthly Service Performance and Activity Reports.
- ¹⁹ Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (10 Oct 2023) 'Minister O'Gorman welcomes substantial investment under Budget 2024' (gov.ie).
- ²⁰ Power, J. (4 March 2024) 'Ten companies paid €58m to run unregulated accommodation for children in care last year'. The Irish Times.
- ²¹ Tusla. Special Care. <https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/special-care/>.
- ²² Child Care Act 1991, s. 23 & 23H(2).
- ²³ Coulter, C (27 Mar 2024). As demand grew, State was shutting residential units for children in care. Irish Times.
- ²⁴ Office of the Ombudsman for Children (21 May 2024) 'Annual Report 2023 – Uncertain Times' (oco.ie), pg. 12.
- ²⁵ High Court Reporters (9 May 2024) 'Teen transferred abroad for specialist care now in 'vastly improved' situation, says judge' (breakingnews.ie).
- ²⁶ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (5 March 2024), Written answers. PQ Ref No. 10189/24.
- ²⁷ O'Donnell, O (26 April 2024) 'Six children waiting for special care unit place, says Tusla, (rte.ie).
- ²⁸ M Mc D, A Child & Anor [2024] IESC 6.
- ²⁹ Child Law Project, 2022 Reports - Volume 2, no. 51 - Judge stresses need for legislative reform in a number of areas.
- ³⁰ Ibid., n., 23.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² Ibid., n. 9, pgs. 51 & 54.
- ³³ CSO (August 2023) 'Educational Attendance and Attainment of Children in Care, 2018 – 2023'.
- ³⁴ Darmody, M., McMahon, L., Banks, J., and Gilligan, R. (2013) 'Education of Children in Care in Ireland: An Exploratory Study' (Office of the Ombudsman for Children), pg. 13.
- ³⁵ Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (27 Nov 23) 'Minister Harris announces funding of €1.15 million to support Care Leavers and members of the Traveller and Roma communities' (gov.ie).
- ³⁶ Government of Ireland (Nov 2022) 'Housing for All - Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023-2025' (gov.ie), pgs. 32-33.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Holland, K. (19 April 2019) 'Young people leaving State care face 'real risk' of homelessness'. The Irish Times.
- ³⁹ Department of Justice (15 April 2021)
- ⁴⁰ Canning, M., Keenan, M. and Breslin, R. (2023) 'Protecting Against Predators: A Scoping Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People in Ireland' (SERP).
- ⁴¹ Government of Ireland (2024) 'Young Ireland - National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028', pg. 50.
- ⁴² EPIC (2023) 'National Advocacy Service Report 2022', pg. 16.
- ⁴³ Health Service Executive and Tusla, Child and Family Agency (2020). 'Joint Protocol for Interagency Collaboration Between the Health Service Executive and Tusla – Child and Family Agency to Promote the Best Interests of Children and Families'.

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- ⁴⁴ Ombudsman for Children's Office (2019) 'Molly One Year On - Have Tusla and the HSE delivered on commitments to children with a disability in the care of the State?', pg. 6.
- ⁴⁵ General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023, Head 10.
- ⁴⁶ Houses of the Oireachtas, Committee on Public Accounts – 'Financial Statements 2022 - Tusla-Child and Family Agency' (29 Feb 2023).
- ⁴⁷ Ibid. n. 4.
- ⁴⁸ Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Foster Care Issues: Discussion. 28 March 2023.
- ⁴⁹ Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (24 May 24) 'Minister O'Donovan announces launch of new educational pathways in social work' (gov.ie).
- ⁵⁰ Government of Ireland (October 2020), 'Spending Review 2020 - Tusla: Staffing and Workforce Planning'. Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. pg.27.
- ⁵¹ Geiran, V. (2 Jan 2023) 'Social work recruitment crisis - Action is urgently needed'. Letters to the editor. Irish Times.
- ⁵² General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023, Head 4.
- ⁵³ Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, 2009, Implementation Plan. 2009, p.463.
- ⁵⁴ Tusla – 'Annual Review on the Adequacy of Child Care and Family Support Services Available 2022', pg. 14.
- ⁵⁵ 869 cases in 2023, 653 cases in 2018.
- ⁵⁶ Tusla 'What are Children's Residential Services?' (tusla.ie).
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., n. 4. 297 of 472 children.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., n. 16.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., n. 9, pg. 40.
- ⁶⁰ Houses of the Oireachtas, Committee on Public Accounts – 'Financial Statements 2022 - Tusla-Child and Family Agency' (29 Feb 2023).
- ⁶¹ Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, General Scheme of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2023: Discussion, 9 May 2023.
- ⁶² Ibid., n. 24.
- ⁶³ Power, J. (4 January 2023). Children younger than twelve living in State residential care homes. The Irish Times.
- ⁶⁴ Baker, N. (27 September 2021). Tusla chief says level of private residential care companies for children is a worry. Irish Examiner.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶⁶ Health Information and Quality Authority, Annual Report 2022. pg.41.
- ⁶⁷ Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (11 June 2019), Written answers. PQ Ref No. 23764/19.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., n. 5.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., n. 36.
- ⁷⁰ The average number of young people 'aging out' care over the last five years was 501. Source: Tusla – 'Annual Review on the Adequacy of Child Care and Family Support Services Available 2022', pg. 85.
- ⁷¹ Norris, M., Palmer A. & Kelleher J. (May 2022) 'Preventing Homelessness among Care Leavers: Review of the Capital Assistance Scheme for Care Leavers'. UCD.
- ⁷² Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (12 Dec 2023), Written answers. PQ Ref No. 55121/23.
- ⁷³ Ibid.