

# National Advocacy Service Casebook

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2024



**EPIC**  
empowering people in care

# National Advocacy Service

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🌐 www.epiconline.ie

🕒 Mon- Fri 9am-5pm

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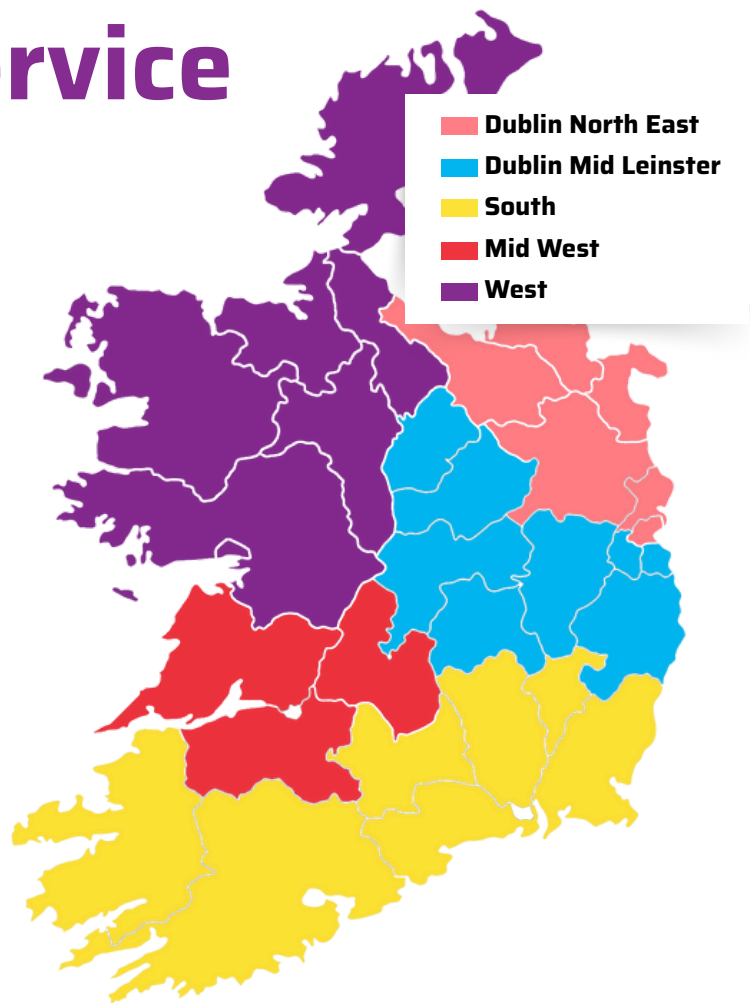
## Our Offices

📍 EPIC Dublin  
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Co. Dublin, D07 KX52

📍 EPIC Cork  
Unit G1 & 2 Northside for  
Business Campus, Ballyvolane,  
Co. Cork T23 E6TT

📍 EPIC Limerick  
Northside Youth Space  
Ballynanty Rd, Ballynanty,  
Co. Limerick, V94 TPP3

📍 EPIC Mayo  
Castlebar Social Services  
Castle Street Car Park,  
Gorteendrunagh, Castlebar,  
Co. Mayo, F23 CY67



At the end of 2024, there were 5,823 children in the care of the state in Ireland, and 2,935 young people in aftercare services. They are not always visible, their voices are seldom heard in society, and they can be overlooked in public policy discussions that directly affect their lives.

# Vision

A society where every child in the care system is valued, respected and heard.



# Values



Empowering

Rights-Based

Inclusive





Ambitious

# Mission

To champion the rights of care-experienced children and young people, ensure their voices inform the policy and practice that affects their lives and cultivate a care aware society.



# Main Presenting Issues

-  **Complaint**
-  **Placement**
-  **Access to services**
-  **Aftercare plan**

For children and young people **under 18**

-  **Accommodation**
-  **Legal**
-  **Access to services**
-  **Financial**

For young people **over 18**

# Case Study: Ryan

## Main Presenting Issue: Complaint



### Background

Ryan is a young person living in a Special Emergency Arrangement (SEA). During a monthly advocacy visit, he shared with his EPIC Advocate that he had been receiving €30 in weekly pocket money for the past two years. Ryan explained that, with the rising cost of living, this amount no longer met his basic needs. To support his point, Ryan had independently researched price increases over time, comparing the cost of everyday items such as toiletries, snacks, and transport fares from previous years to current prices.



### Key Actions taken by Ryan's Advocate

With support from his advocate, Ryan drafted a letter of complaint to his social worker outlining his concerns. The letter included examples from his research, such as the increase in the cost of a bus fare from €2.10 to €2.60 and the price of lunch rising from €4.50 to €6.00. Ryan requested a review of his pocket money to reflect these changes and ensure he could manage his weekly expenses more effectively.



### Outcome

Ryan's social worker reviewed the complaint and approved an increase in his weekly pocket money from €30 to €40. Ryan felt empowered by the process and was pleased that his voice had been heard and acted upon.

# Case Study: Niamh

## Main Presenting Issue: Placement



### Background

Niamh, aged 15, is living in a special care placement. She first met her advocate through EPIC's monthly onsite visiting advocacy service, which offers young people the chance to meet with an advocate if they wish. Niamh explained that she was unhappy with the level of freedom she had. She wanted the opportunity to visit the nearby town to take part in a local football team. She also felt her bedtime was too early, and that having her door locked at night made her feel unsafe.



### Key Actions taken by Niamh's Advocate

At their first meeting, Niamh's advocate explained the role of advocacy and the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Niamh chose to work with the advocate and shared her concerns about access to the football team in town, her bedtime, and the locking of her door.

With Niamh's consent, the advocate contacted her social worker, Guardian ad Litem, and case manager ahead of her upcoming Child in Care Review meeting to ensure her views would be considered. After the review, the case manager reported back that Niamh's concerns had been raised, though not all were resolved to her satisfaction.

Although initially reluctant to meet again, Niamh later chose to re-engage with the advocate to discuss the outcome.

# Case Study: Niamh

## Main Presenting Issue: Placement



### Outcome

Niamh was given permission to participate as part of the football team in the local town, subject to a risk assessment. It was also agreed that her bedroom would no longer be locked at night. While the special care centre maintained its age-based policy on bedtimes, Niamh's was extended by ten minutes, with a further extension agreed when she turns 16.

Niamh was disappointed with the decision on her bedtime but said she understood the reasoning. She expressed satisfaction that her views were listened to and continues to engage with her advocate.

# Case Study: Aoife

## Main Presenting Issue: Access to Services



### Background

Aoife is a 17-year-old student currently in fifth year of secondary school. She lives in a residential care placement. Aoife presented as socially isolated and struggling with her mental health, particularly anxiety.

Aoife had worked with an EPIC advocate in the past, but lost contact due to a change in social worker. When the Advocate met Aoife, she identified two key areas where she needed support: access to consistent counselling and more opportunities to engage socially with peers.



### Key Actions taken by Aoife's Advocate

The advocate worked to re-establish contact with Aoife and build relationships with the professionals who support her. This took a significant amount of time, due to a change in social worker and contact information for Aoife.

The advocate visited Aoife in her residential placement. Aoife discussed her concerns and told her Advocate that she would like to access consistent counselling support for her mental health. She also said that she was lonely and would like to make more friends.

Aoife's advocate communicated her needs to her wider team, advocating for consistent counselling and social engagement opportunities.

The advocate made a referral to EPIC's Youth Engagement Programme (YEP) for



# Case Study: Aoife

## Main Presenting Issue: Access to Services

Aoife to join EPIC's Care Community. This would give Aoife the opportunity to meet other care-experienced young people and take part in social activities.

The advocate continued to liaise with the care team to ensure Aoife's desire for regular counselling was prioritised and addressed.



## Outcome

Aoife is now receiving counselling on a regular basis, which has helped her manage her anxiety more effectively. She has also begun engaging with YEP, offering her a chance to build peer connections and reduce her sense of isolation. Aoife has become an important member of the EPIC Care Community, and has encouraged other care-experienced young people to join.

# Case Study: Aisling

## Main Presenting Issue: Aftercare Planning



### Background

Aisling was living in foster care and experiencing significant anxiety, which affected her education and her ability to engage with professionals. At 17, she recognised that building trust with new people was difficult for her. She asked to be allocated an aftercare worker early, so she would have time to establish a relationship before turning 18.



### Key Actions taken by Aisling's Advocate

Aisling met with her advocate and gave consent for them to contact the relevant professionals. The advocate wrote to the aftercare manager, outlining Aisling's mental health needs, her limited social supports, and her clear wish to begin aftercare planning early. The request was then brought to the local aftercare planning committee for discussion.



### Outcome

Within two weeks, Aisling was allocated an aftercare worker. A meeting was arranged to allow them to begin building a relationship ahead of her transition from care. Aisling expressed relief at the decision and felt reassured that she would have consistent support as she prepared for adulthood. She continues to engage with EPIC's Advocacy Service while planning for her future.

# Case Study: Paul

## Main Presenting Issue: Accommodation



### Background

Paul is a care leaver who was not eligible for aftercare support due to having spent only a short time in care before turning 18. Since leaving care, he had been moving between temporary arrangements, including friends' homes and short-term rentals, and had never had stable accommodation of his own. This lack of stability affected his wellbeing and made maintaining personal relationships challenging. Seeking to secure a more permanent home, Paul approached EPIC for guidance on housing options and support in navigating the system.



### Key Actions taken by Paul's Advocate

At their first meeting, Paul explained that he had never been placed on a housing list and didn't know what options were available to him. The advocate helped him understand the different types of accommodation and guided him through the application process. A second meeting was arranged within a week to go through the forms, check the required documents, and answer any questions. The advocate stayed in touch while Paul completed the application, offering practical advice and support to ensure it was submitted correctly.



### Outcome

The housing application was submitted to the relevant authority. Shortly afterwards, Paul also found temporary shared accommodation independently, providing a more secure living situation while awaiting longer-term housing.

# Case Study: Emily

## Main Presenting Issue: Legal



### Background

Emily spent most of her life living in relative foster care and was adopted by her cousin shortly before her 18th birthday. She and her adoptive parents believed she would receive the aftercare allowance, and she was allocated an aftercare worker.

When Emily sought her aftercare payment, she was informed that she was not entitled to the allowance because she was adopted. Emily is still in secondary school and planning for her future, but she was concerned about her finances and wanted support in accessing legal advice to challenge the decision.



### Key Actions taken by Emily's Advocate

Emily's advocate met with her and her adoptive mother to explore the situation and confirm that no other payments, such as the post-adoption payment, had been offered. With Emily's consent, the advocate contacted her aftercare worker, social worker, and former Guardian ad Litem to gather information on her eligibility and the reasoning behind the decision.

The Advocate supported Emily in accessing legal advice through the Community Law & Mediation (CLM) clinic. Emily attended a CLM session, where she was advised on her options, including submitting a request for a discretionary review of the decision and, if necessary, pursuing a judicial review. With the advocate's guidance, Emily wrote to her aftercare worker to request a review and explain her financial need to continue in education.

# Case Study: Emily

## Main Presenting Issue: Legal



## Outcome

Emily and her adoptive mother were later notified that the decision had been reviewed and that Tusla would grant the aftercare allowance given the circumstances, provided Emily remains in education. A judicial review was not required.

Emily is now receiving the aftercare allowance and continues in education.

# Case Study: Daniel

## Main Presenting Issue: Access to Services



### Background

Daniel is a young person with care-experience who recently moved into an aftercare placement in a new town. Before the move, he had been linked in with a specialist counselling service that was only available in his former area. The relocation made it very difficult for Daniel to keep attending, as the journey by public transport would have taken over two hours each way with several changes.



### Key Actions taken by Daniel's Advocate

Daniel spoke with his advocate about how the move had cut him off from counselling, which had been an important support for him since his teenage years. He also explained how valuable it was to have time with staff after sessions to help him manage the emotions that came up. With Daniel's agreement, the advocate raised the issue with his aftercare worker and arranged a joint meeting. At first, the focus was on promoting independence, but the advocate outlined Daniel's existing skills and showed how this situation created barriers beyond his control. They worked together to map the travel route and to highlight the emotional benefit of the support that followed each session.



### Outcome

After further discussions, the aftercare worker brought the matter to management. Funding was approved for short-term transport assistance, including taxis and rental cars, while a longer-term option was explored. The support was due for review after six months. Daniel was able to return to counselling and felt reassured that his concerns were listened to and acted upon.



**empowering people in care**

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