



EPIC's Manifesto for the next Programme for Government 2020
6 ways to stop failing children and young people in state care

#GE2020 #EPICManifesto

EPIC is calling for:

1. **The Right to Independent Advocacy:** All children in care and with care experience should have a right to independent advocacy. The right to independent advocacy for all children and young adults in the care system must be enshrined in legislation. The current review of the Child Care Act 1991 presents the optimal time for this.
2. **To Extend the Age Limit for Aftercare:** EPIC calls for a full review of the Aftercare system including the extension of the upper age limit for aftercare support to 26 years of age.
3. **To Improve Data Collation:** Increase data collated and published on children in care and include a longitudinal study on children in care into adulthood. Data on educational outcomes for children in care from primary, secondary, post leaving cert and 3rd level education is essential. This data should be benchmarked against children and young people in the general population to see where additional supports are needed to improve outcomes of children in care and beyond.
4. **To Improve Mental Health Support:** All children and young adults in care must be provided with a variety of dedicated mental health supports, including therapeutic support, to enable them to deal with their experience of trauma and to help them to build appropriate coping skills and resilience. The State must provide all necessary supports and interventions within the state and immediately stop sending children and young people outside of this jurisdiction for specialist care. Dual supports to encompass addiction and mental health must be rolled out.
5. **To Recruit and Retain More Social Workers:** A national social work recruitment and retention action plan and roll out is required. We need more social workers and better supports and incentives to retain them. There should be better and more contact between children in care and their social worker, but this can only be achieved if we have the required number of social workers.
6. **To Ensure No Child Moves from Care to Homelessness:** No child leaving care should have to access homeless accommodation. EPIC is part of the *Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness* and supports their action points. Step down and supported accommodation for care leavers and vulnerable young people must form part of any housing plan.



About EPIC

EPIC is a national voluntary organisation that works with and for children and young people who are currently living in care or who have experience of living in care. This includes those in residential care, foster care, relative care, hostel, high support and special care. EPIC also works with young people preparing to leave care and those in aftercare. EPIC's National Advocacy and Participation programmes are designed to ensure children and young adults in care have a voice and are listened to on issues affecting their lives. EPIC is a national service with offices in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway. www.epiconline.ie

EPIC is the only independent national organisation providing direct 1:1 advocacy support to children and young people in care; to enable them to have their views and concerns heard, to empower them to speak for themselves, to resolve the issues and problems they raise, to help them to receive the services and support they need and bring about positive change in their lives.

The three core functions of EPIC are Advocacy, Participation and System Change (Policy & Research).

Guiding Principles: That the welfare and best interest of children and young people is paramount in all of EPIC's work.

That children and young people with care experience:

- Should be able to contribute to and participate in the society in which they live
- Should be actively involved decisions made about their own lives
- Should have their rights upheld and respected
- Should have support and guidance appropriate to their age and individual needs
- Should have a right to information relevant to their care
- Should be consulted about their views on all matters that affect them - these views should be actively sought by all those with responsibility for their care and welfare

EPIC works in partnership with Tusla to ensure the availability and delivery of advocacy to all children in care and those with care experience. An important aspect of this partnership is the sharing of knowledge and information to improve the outcomes for these children.

EPIC also works closely with Tusla's PPFS program to ensure the voices of children in care are heard and responded to.

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