



## Press release

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### **#CareDay21 – The Global Celebration of Children in Care: February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Care Day is the world's largest celebration of children and young people in the care system. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the contribution they make to our communities and society, while exploring what policy and legislative reforms are necessary in Ireland to ensure better and more equitable outcomes for care experienced children and youth.

There are nearly 6,000 children and young people in care in Ireland, and approximately 2,900 young adults in after-care. These cohorts lack visibility, are often stigmatised and are overlooked in national conversations on children's issues. Care Day is a way to highlight the positive impact these children and young people are making and improve understanding of the obstacles they face.

Speaking on Care Day 21, CEO of EPIC, Marissa Ryan stated:

*"Children and young people in care and after-care make a real difference to our communities and society. They are brave, resilient, and brilliant people, who with the right supports and services will be the doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists and shopkeepers of the future. Today, we want everyone in Ireland to acknowledge and celebrate them – they rise every day and overcome challenges most of us will never experience."*

Ryan continued, *"Every child in care, and every young person in after-care has a right to fairness and equity in how they are treated, listened to and cared for. On Care Day we are urging the Government to use the opportunity of the current review of the Child Care Act to ensure care-experienced children and youth are given the same chances as children in the general population so they can achieve their full potential. This includes additional supports in relation to accommodation, education and mental health, and extending the age limit for after-care services. By providing a focused, integrated response to their needs across Departments, the Government can ensure those in their care achieve their full potential"*

**END – For more information, please visit [www.careday.org](http://www.careday.org)**



## **Notes to Editor**

1. [EPIC](#) is an independent, national organisation working with and for children and young people who are currently living in care or who have care experience.
2. “Care experience” refers to children and young people who are or were cared for by family members with the support of social workers; foster carers; or in children’s homes and residential or special care units.
3. Throughout Care Week, EPIC is running webinars on issues affecting children and youth in care which we can speak to, including on LGBTI+, Ethnicity, Education, Disability, Accommodation and Access to Justice. Simultaneously, we are running lots of fun activities for children and young people currently in care, from art competitions to bake offs and scavenger hunts.
4. EPIC is calling on the Government to initiate a range of policy and legislative reforms to improve the care system in Ireland – including enshrining the right to independent advocacy for children and youth in care in legislation; improving education, accommodation and mental health supports for care experienced children and youth, extending the age limit for after-care services and embarking on a longitudinal study on the situation of children and youth in care to inform practice and decision making.
5. EPIC is celebrating Care Day in partnership with Tusla and with the support of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.
6. Spokespeople are available – including members of EPIC’s Youth Council who are a group of young people with care experience.