

Invitation to Tender: Design a proposal to raise awareness of care-experienced children in schools

Introduction

EPIC is the only independent organisation in Ireland which works with, and on behalf of, children and young people in care or with care experience.

There are nearly 6,000 children and young people in care in Ireland. The children in care with whom EPIC works routinely highlight the shame and stigma which surrounds the care system, and the associated societal prejudice they encounter. This leads to many children experiencing a strong sense of isolation and marginalisation. Coupled with trauma, reduced family support and additional social stressors, this impacts on their ability to thrive and achieve their full potential.

EPIC's Youth Council and the children in our service have long identified schools as the appropriate target for a campaign to address these issues. Schools are the one place where children in care mix daily with their peers, and where the support of adult professionals can improve a child's care journey. However, teachers and guidance counsellors often report that they lack the knowledge, skills, and capacity to engage their pupils on care issues, despite their willingness to do so.

EPIC is seeking a consultant to work with us; to consult with children and young people with care experience; and to engage key stakeholders to scope out a solution that can be implemented in an Irish context and which has the support of key partners in education and education welfare.

Purpose

- To identify what resources and supports teachers require to better engage with children in care in their classrooms and to make their school a safe and inclusive space for children in care.
- To identify how these learning and resource needs can be met, and then determine how to effectively (time, money, and impact) disseminate this to schools/teachers.

Output

A brief document that:

- Articulates the problems experienced by care-experienced children and young people and their teachers in school settings.
- Proposes a solution informed by children and young people, educators and international good practice, including identification of resources for teachers.
- A high-level implementation plan and budget

Approach

- In proposing the solution and approach to implementation, please draw on evidence of good practice internationally in relation to children in care and education and draw on examples of effective implementation in reaching a teaching audience in an Irish context.
- Please ensure that the proposed solution is informed by children and young people in care, teachers and key stakeholders including the Department of Education, the Children in Care Working Group, the Tusla Education Support Service, Social Workers, and experts involved in initial teacher education and CPD and the inspectorate.
- It is assumed that this work will be largely desk-based with consultation and meetings via zoom.

Desired Outcome

Through the development process, seek to build buy-in from stakeholders and secure their commitment to supporting the dissemination of materials, engage teachers, and raise the profile of children in care within the education system.

Budget: Approximately €5,000

Skills and Expertise:

- Commitment to work in partnership with EPIC and the key stakeholders outlined.
- Proven ability to carry out independent research, project design and consultancy in a related area.
- Proven experience of desk research and qualitative research, including facilitating group discussions and one-to-one interviews.
- Proven experience that demonstrates ethical research conduct – successful tenderers will be required to be garda vetted by EPIC for the purposes of this research.
- Proven ability to develop and evaluate projects and programmes, including the assimilation of research findings into clear, workable recommendations.
- Ability to present research findings to an audience, online or in person.
- Experience of participative research with children and youth would be an advantage.
- Experience of working with vulnerable young people would be an advantage.

Application Process:

1. Cover letter, to include tenderer's outline plan and methodology for approaching the work: maximum 2 pages.
2. Include a link to, or copy of, a sample of past work that is similar in content and/or style to the above outputs – i.e., a research report or strategic plan.
3. CV(s) of all personnel involved.
4. Costings for the work to be undertaken.
5. Details of referees.

Please submit your application to recruit@epiconline.ie

Closing date: 7th January 2022