

IRISH AFTERCARE NETWORK

Providing Support to People Working With Care Leavers

April 2022

Dear Irish Aftercare Network Member,

I hope you have been keeping well since our last newsletter in December and are looking forward to the break over Easter.

I have some very good news for you in this edition of our newsletter: we are delighted to announce the return of our in-person Annual Conference that will take place on Friday 7th October 2022 in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone. I look forward to seeing you at this event.

As a result of your ongoing support so far, 2022 has been an extremely successful year for our Network. Only last week we met with Kate Duggan from Tusla and an update on that meeting is provided below. In March we made a submission to the public consultation on the new National Youth Homeless Strategy. We also celebrated a night of entertainment provided by young people in aftercare. The network is currently developing a new communication strategy.

New research on the lived experience of care leavers in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic is shared with you in this newsletter along with several useful resources, the very latest Oireachtas monitoring and an update on Care Day 2022 from EPIC's Youth Council.

I extend a warm welcome to all the new members of the Network.

The network is here to support you, our members, please do not hesitate to contact us if we can help in any way via email: info@breakingthrough.org.

Kind regards

Ciaran Kenny

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Chairperson

Irish Aftercare Network News

Meeting Kate Duggan 28.03.2022



Irish Aftercare Network Chairperson Ciaran Kenny and committee member Neil Forsyth met with Director of Services and Integration at Tusla, Kate Duggan on 28.03.2022.

A constructive discussion took place where all issues that were highlighted by members nationally at the recent regional meetings were brought up for discussion. Issues relating to area of origin, housing, aftercare supports, the current joint protocols that are in place as well as the impact that the Ukrainian crisis will have on services across the board were discussed at length. Kate has agreed to raise a number of these issues within senior management in Tusla. It was also agreed to meet later in the year for a further discussion and follow on from this meeting.

DNC Aftercare Drama night



“Stand By Me” Cast with Irish Aftercare Network Chairperson Ciaran Kenny.

March 15th, 2022, saw a night of entertainment provided by young people in aftercare that those present won't forget for a long time. A full house at the Axis Centre in Ballymun witnessed an incredible show titled “Stand By Me”, showcasing all that is truly wonderful about young people today. The night also featured performances by Britain's Got Talent Star, Leah Barniville, dance group XOD and magician Steve Spade. The drama forum was run by the brilliant Johnny Ward and was overseen by Ciaran Kenny, Chairperson of the Irish Aftercare Network and Tusla Aftercare Worker along with his colleague Stuart Lynch from Don Bosco Care. Thanks to all those members who

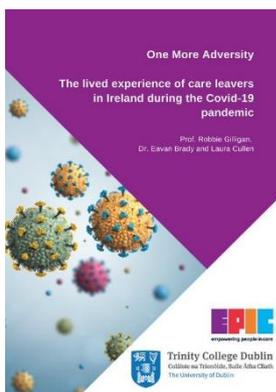
supported the young people on the night. What a way to showcase the amazing talents of young people in aftercare today.

[Submission to the new National Youth Homelessness Strategy](#)

On March 8th the Network made a submission to the public consultation on the Youth Homeless Strategy. The aim of this Strategy is to help people who are aged 18 – 24 and who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It is clear that any Youth Homelessness Strategy will require an integrated, whole-of-Government approach, with a multitude of key stakeholders playing a vital role in addressing the fundamental issues arising in addressing youth homelessness. It is also important that a wide range of views can form part of the process in developing the Strategy. More information on the Strategy is available at this link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/consultation/3aec9-consultation-on-youth-homelessness-strategy/#why-are-we-launching-a-public-consultation>

[Lived experience of care leavers in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic](#)



One more adversity: The lived experience of care leavers in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr. Eavan Brady, Vice-Chair of the Irish Aftercare Network, and two colleagues from Trinity College Dublin came together with advocates from EPIC, Empowering People in Care to learn more about the experiences of care leavers in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research team interviewed 16 young people (aged 18-27) to explore the issues they faced, what helped, and what they learned about themselves during Covid-19. The pandemic brought fresh challenges to the lives of the young people with some feeling more isolated, struggling with disrupted routines, and living with fears about what the future held. Many also experienced worries and difficulties about money, accommodation, and mental health. Many care leavers also reported that they had found resources in themselves and their networks that had built up their confidence and helped them get through the pandemic, for example, taking up a new hobby or starting a job. The study highlighted how crucial supportive relationships were and are for care leavers. Support from friends and family was mentioned a lot, although the young people also valued the support of professionals including aftercare workers. The study shone light on the care leavers' experience of Covid but also gave us new insights into wider

issues in their lives. You can read the full report at this link:

<http://www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/98279> You can also watch a recording of the report launch at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0lpnqtL4XM>.

[Selected recent publications](#)

Gilligan, R., **Brady, E.**, & Cullen, L. (2022). *One More Adversity: The lived experience of care leavers in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic*. Dublin: School of Social Work & Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25546/98279>

O'Connor Funcheon, S. & **Brady, E.** (2021). An exploration of professional and practice-based perspectives on reunification of children in out-of-home care in Ireland: The road less travelled?. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 122, 1-11.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105366>

Brady, E. & Gilligan, R. (2020). The role of agency in shaping the educational journeys of care-experienced adults: Insights from a life course study of education and care. *Children & Society*, 24(2), 121-135. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12361>

Brady, E. & Gilligan, R. (2020). Supporting care-experienced adults' educational journeys: 'Linked lives' over the life course. *Child & Family Social Work*, 25(2), 221-229.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12677>

Brady, E. & Gilligan, R. (2019). Exploring diversity in the educational pathways of care-experienced adults: Findings from a life course study of education and care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 104, 1-11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.06.014>

[Irish Aftercare Network Online Regional Meetings](#)

We would like to thank all IAN members who participated in our online regional meetings. A summary of regional discussion pieces included below.

8th February – The Leinster Regional Meeting

- Area of Origin and the need for a transfer option. Policy states there is no option to transfer and even if there were aftercare workers have no capacity due to caseloads. This is also a time management issue as aftercare workers using time travelling when already stretched with caseloads. The network will enquire to see if Tusla have data on this.
- There needs to be a dedicated aftercare budget.

- There is an increase in aftercare beds required. There is a lack of aftercare beds particularly for young mothers and young women. There needs to be adequate move on plans. We know what they need but unfortunately can't provide it.

15th February – The Western Regional Meeting

- Financial Policy & the issue around social welfare being means tested.
- Area of origin and no transfer options available.
- Joint Protocol – not working effectively.

1st March 24th – The Munster Regional Meeting

- Wardship.
- Joint Protocol. Link to relevant document:
<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/disability/progressing-disability/pds-programme/documents/hse-tusla-2020-joint-protocol-for-interagency-collaboration-between-the-hse-and-tusla.pdf>
- Positive feedback re: Home Share.

IAN Communications

Communications and Social Media Officer Recruitment

After an open recruitment campaign, the Irish Aftercare Network recently recruited a Communications and Social Media Officer. Wayne Tobin will work with us until May 31st developing a communications strategy for the organisation. The purpose of this position is to give more visibility to our work nationally and enhance communications with members.

Communications 'Pulse' Survey

A short survey (approximately 2 minutes) has been developed to ascertain the main communication channels that our members find useful. The survey will also allow us to gather some feedback for the new communications strategy. You are invited to complete the survey at this link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScvxj0AydVlcF1gMSsmV2aMMTgpJr2YVqGMRcXtN1gzVC6myA/viewform>. If you have any difficulties with the survey or would prefer to give your suggestions by email, please email Wayne directly at communications@breakingthrough.org. As we post more on social media at this time, we encourage you to engage with our posts to help us grow our followers.

Care Day 2022

With thanks to the EPIC Youth Council.

Let's make Care Day the flagship that ignites a national conversation, with us at the table

by EPIC, Empowering People in Care Youth Council Members Alan Fay, Lauren O'Toole, Rory Brown, Jasmine Mooney, Clara O'Shea Collins, and Aaron Ferguson



Right now, there are close to 6,000 children in care in Ireland and 3,035 young adults in after-care services. We are not always visible, our voices are not often heard, and we tend to be overlooked in public policy discussions that directly affect our lives. This year the EPIC Empowering People in Care community celebrated the seventh annual Care Day. Care

Day is a moment to celebrate the achievements and contributions care-experienced children, young people and adults make to our communities and society every day. But it is more than that. It is also about promoting positive care identities and increasing understanding of the unique challenges we can face.

A day that celebrates the positive

The idea for Care Day came about in 2016 during a weekend camping trip in Scotland for young care leavers from across Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. While discussing care experiences, the young people who attended agreed that amongst the public there is little knowledge of the care system. This leads to negative stereotyping and misunderstanding about children in care. The group discussed how this contributes to shared experiences of stigma or shame about their circumstances; how uncomfortable it can be disclosing that you are in care, how some children never even tell their best friends, leading to even greater isolation and marginalisation.

That weekend, care experienced young people including members of the EPIC Youth Council imagined a day that would focus on positive visibility, even if your care experience wasn't always positive. Another crucial point of Care Day for us was to create a sense of community. A way to help children and young people support each other and be proud of who they are - because there is so much more to us, our identities, and our stories than you might think.

Since then, Care Day has become globally recognised with Holland, Finland, New Zealand, Australia, Spain, Croatia, Sweden, Greece and Italy joining the celebrations. It has even caught the attention of Zimbabwe and Turkey!

'It takes a village to raise a child'

'It takes a village' is an African proverb many of us are now familiar with. It acknowledges how important the people in our village are in supporting us and shaping our values, morals, and identities.

So, this year we wanted to extend the Care Day celebration to include all the people who have been, or continue to be, a positive influence in our lives, and to highlight how important these relationships are throughout our care journeys.

For children in care and care-leavers, the village that raises us can look quite different to that of our peers. Our villages include many people that our friends would not come across, such as foster parents and siblings, social workers, Guardians ad Litem (GALs) or independent advocates from EPIC to name a few. We also have the usual suspects in our village though, like youth workers, friends, teachers, or sports coaches. The aspect that all communities share is the need for every village to have people who see and accept you for who you are, who listen to and hear you, and who encourage you and inspire you. This is what we want for every child in the care system.

A care aware future?

The EPIC Youth Council is encouraging people to realise their potential to be that important person or positive influence in the life of a child or young person in care and to become more Care Aware. For Care Day 22 we asked people to join us in the celebration of our achievements, but in promoting positive care identities. Our challenge to you is to learn more about Ireland's care-experienced children and young people and help us make Care Day the flagship that ignites a national conversation, with us at the table.

We don't want to live in silence or on the side-lines. We are here, we exist. We are in your schools, places of employment, universities, and sports clubs. We even take buses and trains! So, get to know us, talk to us, we are epic.

See a snapshot of our Care Day 22 celebration at this link:

<https://www.canva.com/design/DAE5AczvgBQ/ji4VIZDj9ycLodwEQPTr8Q/view>

(use the arrow on the right of the screen to navigate).

March 2022 Oireachtas Monitoring

Thursday 24th March

Joe Flaherty TD ask the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth his views on measures undertaken by his Department to tackle child and youth homelessness and care leavers were mentioned in the response. See response See response:

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2022-03-24/44/>.

Tuesday 22nd March

Ciarán Cannon TD asked the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth when was the last review of the level of allowances paid to foster parents; and if he plans to carry out another review in view of the increased cost of living. See Minister's response:

https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2022-03-22/685/#pq_685.

Tuesday 8th March

Question from Alan Farrell to Minister O'Gorman on the supports that TUSLA provide to young adults leaving foster care to secure their own accommodation. Useful data from Q4 2021 on range of accommodation types for young adults in receipt of an aftercare service.

Accommodation Type	#
Residential Care Placement (over 18 years)	144
Remained Living with Foster Carers	1047
Independent Living	639
Designated Care Leavers Accommodation (CAS)	54
At Home	213
Supported Lodgings	46
"Other" Accommodation	196
Total	2339

See full statement: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2022-03-08a.995>.

Tuesday 1st March 2021

Peadar Tóibín asked the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth the number of children in State care are suspected to be homeless; and the number of persons who are currently in aftercare who are suspected to be homeless. See short response:

<https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2022-03-01a.1406>

Date for the Diary

- Annual Conference: Friday 7th October 2022 in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone



We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members a very happy Easter. We thank you for your continued support of the network.

Breaking Through CLG (Co-ordinators of The Irish Aftercare Network) *under The Scheme to Support National Organisations is funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Rural and Community Development*

