

# IRISH AFTERCARE NETWORK

*Providing Support to People Working With Care Leavers*

## Network Members Meeting, February 2023

Thank you to all who attended the Network Members Meeting in the Carmelite Centre on 28 February 2023, the first one in 3 years! It was so good to see everyone in person. We are very grateful to Sage for their sponsorship of this event. The feedback was very positive. A thank you to all our presenters on the morning, who are as follows:

- Metasebia Kereta & Siobhan Hussmann, Aftercare Workers, Team for Separated Children Seeking International Protection, Child and Family Agency, TUSLA
- Lisa O’Loughlen, Director, NIAP
- Angela Shafer, Community Education Co-ordinator, Northside Partnership & Jamie Reilly Aftercare Worker, TUSLA



Metasebia Kereta & Siobhan Hussmann

## Network Members Meeting, March 2023

Our next Network Member’s meeting will be held on 31 March 2023, 9.15am-1.15pm in the Absolute Hotel, Limerick. Please email [info@breakingthrough.org](mailto:info@breakingthrough.org) if you or any of your colleagues would like to attend. We will have guest speakers from the following organisations at this event, and going by our previous meeting, we are sure this will be very informative.

- Jigsaw
- Homeless Action Team, Limerick
- GOSHH – Gender, Orientation, Sexual Health, HIV
- ADAPT, Domestic Abuse Services

## Tusla, QQI Level 3 New Beginnings Course



Tusla are opening referrals for the QQI Level 3 New Beginnings Course – personal effectiveness for young people leaving care. This is a component course which focuses on developing skills linked to Aftercare.

There will be a limited number of places. So, if you have anyone who might benefit from the course, please get in touch.

### Outline of the course

- This course is open to YP aged 16+ and is run on the NALA platform and will be supported by Northside Partnership (NSP), CYPSC, SWD and Aftercare.
- This course is aimed at YP in the care system and focuses on short and long-term planning, personal development, and utilising skills the YP already possesses. This is all directly linked to aftercare planning and is aimed to be a flexible educational course.
- There is additional literacy support provided by Northside Partnership and we are available to meet with Residential Staff to help with the delivery of the program.
- On completion the YP will achieve a QQI Level 3 component award with the

opportunity to continue online education through the NALA platform.

- In addition to this there will be incentives for those who complete the program. €50 one for all vouchers at halfway point through the course and then €50 one for all voucher when they have submitted the final report.
- Activity day out as a group or independently.
- This course can be run completely online and therefore will not be affected by locations or structured timetables.

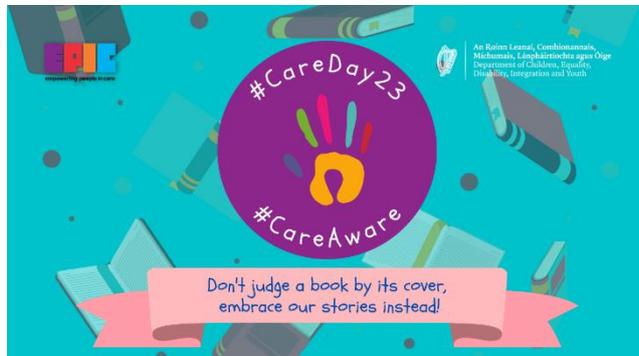
Please find a link to a video to give you a feel for the course:

[\(26\) Northside Partnership Aftercare Toolkit - YouTube](#)

If you would like to secure a place or need additional information, please contact [Jamie.reilly@tusla.ie](mailto:Jamie.reilly@tusla.ie).

---

### Care Day 2023!



Care Day was established in 2016 as a day to celebrate the positive achievements and contributions of children and young people in care or with care experience, and on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023, EPIC was delighted to celebrate its 8<sup>th</sup> national Care Day in partnership with Tusla and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth – both of whom EPIC thank for the continued support of this important day!

The #CareDay23 theme, 'Don't judge a book by its cover, embrace our stories instead!', was developed by children and young people from EPIC and it aims to address stigma and challenge negative stereotypes about being in care. Through their theme, they encourage people to learn about children in care, to look beyond the surface, and to see that every care-experienced child and young person is an individual with their own unique story, ambitions, and dreams for the future.

To kick things off, on Care Day eve, EPIC hosted a special event at the CHQ Building in Dublin for Care Community and Youth Council members, partners and supporters to launch *Embrace Our Stories*. *Embrace Our Stories* is a new photography exhibition by children in care and young care leavers. Through their images and voice recordings, they invite people to learn about their stories of hope, courage, talent, and achievement. Everyone was incredibly excited to have Minister Roderic O'Gorman open the event, which also had contributions from EPIC Youth Council members Clara and

Kai, Minister Joe O'Brien, interim CEO of Tusla, Kate Duggan, and the Ombudsperson for Children, Niall Muldoon.

Care Day celebrations were held across Ireland and into the weekend with a variety of events organised and supported by #CareAware champions, all of which EPIC was equally delighted to partner on. Mayo marked the day with the launch of a wonderfully creative art exhibition by children in care at the Linenhall Arts Centres – that you can still go and see by the way! The work on show is the culmination of a series of workshops held with children that was sphere headed by local Tusla staff, Foroige Connect, and the Irish Foster Care Association. Meanwhile, in Limerick, there was a mini photography exhibition and coffee morning, and a very epic Care Day Lego wall that was built by a member of the EPIC Care Community – this young man also inspired this year's Care Day "Stick Together Stand Together" Lego Challenge. Down Cork way, the Lord Mayor of Cork, Deirdre Forde, attended a fun social gathering organised by the Tusla Cork team which also featured some incredible cakes baked by care-experienced young people, while DJ Stevie G from Red FM entertained the crowd. Globally, **messages of celebration and solidarity and news of other events flooded social media on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023** – check out the hashtags #CareDay23 and #CareAware if you missed it!

EPIC want to say a big THANK YOU to everyone who played a part, got involved, or showed their support on Care Day 23. It takes a village, community spirit, partnership and lots of creative, talented children and young people to celebrate being #CareAware. EPIC will be busy bringing the #CareAware message and Care Day 23 theme to new communities and localities this year. So, if you are interested in hosting the *Embrace Our Stories* Photography Exhibition, please contact [carolinereid@epiconline.ie](mailto:carolinereid@epiconline.ie)



**Edel Weldon, IAN Committee Member & Advocacy Officer, EPIC**

### Youth Homelessness Strategy, 2023-2025

The government's new Youth Homelessness Strategy, 2023-2025, was published last October. The Irish Aftercare Network participated in the public consultation and submitted a detailed submission. Care-leavers are identified in the strategy as a group that is at a heightened risk of homelessness and many young people are not ready to progress to independent living upon leaving care at 18 years of age. Moreover, the strategy acknowledges the increasingly challenging housing market, particularly in the private-rented sector. It emphasises the need for the provision of a continuum of

accommodation options, including the need for more semi-independent accommodation, as well as a greater role for local authorities in meeting the needs of this vulnerable group. The strategy contains several specific commitments to support care-leavers, including the publication of Tusla’s Strategic Plan for Aftercare, 2023-2025, which it states will contain “a commitment to an integrated approach to implementing key recommendations on the provision of an appropriate continuum of accommodation for young people with care experience”. There is also a commitment to review and update Housing Circular 46/2014 on the Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care. This protocol was supposed to enable local authorities to carry out housing needs assessments before young people turned 18, thus allowing them to be placed on the housing waiting list in advance of them leaving care. In practice there is little evidence that the protocol has been effective and has not served to enhance housing options for care leavers. The strategy states that “the updated Circular will provide that the provision of units to care leavers should be monitored through Housing Delivery Action Plans and will also align with Tusla’s forthcoming Strategic Plan for Aftercare.” And finally, the strategy contains a commitment to the continued provision of capital funding to support the Tusla CAS scheme, which to date has provided a considerable number of long-term housing tenancies for care-leavers across the country.

*Neil Forsyth, IAN Committee Member & Head of Youth Services, Focus Ireland*



**Free suicide intervention & prevention training on behalf of the HSE – Connecting for Life are available to all and take place nationwide.**

#### **Online programmes**

LivingWorks Start, Suicide Prevention Skills Online

[LivingWorks Start](#), is an online, interactive training programme that will give you the skills and knowledge to keep others safe from suicide. It will help you identify people who are at risk, confidently ask them about the topic of suicide and connect them with resources that can help them stay safe. The programme uses a mix of guided online content, video and interactive questions. You can pause and recommence the programme at your own convenience. On average, the programme will take one hour 30 minutes to complete, but you can work at your own pace. This programme is accredited by the [Psychological Society of Ireland](#).

- Irish residents, aged 18 and over, can request a free LivingWorks Start licence, from your local coordinator.
- Contact details for your local coordinator can be found [here](#).

#### **Face-to-face programmes**

##### **Understanding Self-harm**

The [Understanding Self-harm](#) workshop

provides opportunities to improved knowledge, awareness and understanding of self-harming behaviour. Participants consider how personal attitudes and experiences might affect their helping role with a person who self-harms. It aims to clarify what self-harm is, what leads people to engage in the behaviour and considers its relationship with suicide. The causes, reasons behind the behaviour, and the functions are discussed. Positive approaches to engaging with and caring for someone who self-harms are presented. Active participation is encouraged.

##### **safeTALK**

[safeTALK](#) (Suicide Alertness for Everyone) is an internationally recognised half-day training programme that prepares participants to recognise and engage with people who may be having thoughts of suicide and to connect them to suicide first aid resources. Most people with thoughts of suicide don't truly want to die, but are struggling with the pain in their lives. Through their words and actions, they invite help to stay alive. safeTALK-trained helpers can recognise these invitations for help and take action by supporting people to connect with life-saving resources, supports and services.

##### **ASIST**

[ASIST](#) (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) is a two-day skills building workshop

in suicide first aid. Participants are trained to reduce the immediate risk of a suicide and increase the support for a person at risk. The workshop provides opportunities to learn what a person at risk may need from others in order to keep safe and get more help. Those taking part in the training will feel challenged

and safe, work interactively with others in small groups, learn a suicide first aid model that provides a framework for skills practice and experience powerful audio visuals.

To register to attend any of these training sessions please visit [www.nosp.ie/training](http://www.nosp.ie/training)

---

### Meeting with Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon

We are due to meet with the Ombudsman for Children, Dr Niall Muldoon, on 15 March 2023 to discuss various topics. We will outline these topics in our next newsletter

---

### Dates for the Diary

- **Irish Aftercare Network Meeting**, The Absolute Hotel, Limerick, 9.15am-1.15pm 31 March 2023
- **Annual Conference 2023** –The Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, 13 October 2023

For further information please email [info@breakingthrough.org](mailto:info@breakingthrough.org)

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*



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



government supporting communities