

# How We Can Help

## Aleksja's story

### Homelessness

Aleksja sought out the help of our legal advice clinics for herself and her two young boys, Danny (1) and Noah (2). Aleksja had lost her husband and had been living in emergency accommodation outside of Dublin, for nine months. The accommodation was a former B&B which was shared with other families, but the building was far from family-friendly. There were no stair gates on the stairs, there were rat traps in the hallways and Aleksja was given bunk beds to sleep in with her baby and toddler. The communal kitchen was only open for limited periods making it extremely difficult to prepare meals and when it was closed, there was no running water except in the bedrooms. Aleksja had been granted the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), yet still it was proving difficult for her to secure a permanent home for her family. Despite complaining many times to the local authority about these problems, nothing had changed.

**Issue** Immediately, Aleksja's story exposed very serious risks to the health and safety of Danny and Noah; the absence of vital safety features for any home with young children. This case also highlights the difficulty many families outside Dublin face accessing advocacy services.

**How we helped** Through our clinic, Aleksja was advised that she should make a formal complaint in writing to the local authority in relation to the standard of accommodation and the issues of child safety and welfare. We identified a potential local advocate to help Aleksja through this process and also made her aware of the role the Ombudsman for Children's Office and Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission can play and how she could engage with them. The solicitor also discussed with Aleksja the prohibition on discriminating against a person on the HAP scheme when seeking accommodation, as well as the steps she could take if she experienced discrimination in this process.

