

ACTION FOR AFTERCARE

Minister Frances Fitzgerald
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
Department of Children and Youth Affairs
Hawkins House
Dublin 2

12 July 2011

Dear Minister Fitzgerald,

Action on Aftercare is a coalition of NGOs, academics, aftercare workers and legal professionals who have come together to call for an amendment to Section 45 of the 1991 Child Care Act to ensure that all children and young people leaving state care have a statutory legal right to aftercare if they need it.

We wish to express our concern regarding the proposed passing of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2009 on 14 July 2011 without an amendment to place the provision of aftercare on a statutory basis. This Bill provides a historic opportunity to protect some of our most vulnerable young people and help them make a successful transition from care to independent living.

All of the research highlights the correlation between support for young people leaving care and successful transitions to a life after care. (Stein, 1990,1994,1999)(Stein, Pinkerton & Kelleher, 2000) (Biehal et al 1996,1999)(Kelleher, Kelleher & Corbett,2000) (Mayock & O'Sullivan, 2007). Recent research from EPIC (formerly IAYPIC) also indicates that all young people leaving care need and should have access to quality aftercare supports, particularly for times of crisis. The passing of this Bill without such protection would represent a disappointing change from the welcome progress this Government has made in furthering child welfare and protection in Ireland.

Allowing the Child Care (Amendment) Bill to be passed without the necessary changes needed to protect this vulnerable group of young people would be a missed opportunity, and not in accordance with the high expectations and standards that your new Department is seeking to achieve and uphold.

Yours sincerely

Mike Allen	Director of Advocacy, Focus Ireland
Jennifer Gargan	Director, Empowering People in Care (EPIC)
Norah Gibbons	Director of Advocacy, Barnardos
Jillian van Turnhout	Chief Executive, Children's Rights Alliance
Catherine Carty	Doctoral Fellow, Child and Family Research Centre, NUIG
Geoffrey Shannon	Child Law Expert