

The Holistic Educational Needs of Children and Young People in Care: Placing an Invisible Issue on the National Policy Agenda

Keynote Presentation,

Making Care Fair, Equality through Equity - Education, EPIC (Empowering
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Dr Paul Downes

Director, Educational Disadvantage Centre

Associate Professor of Education (Psychology)

Affiliate Professor, University of Malta Centre for Resilience and Socio-
Emotional Health

Institute of Education

Dublin City University, Ireland

paul.downes@dcu.ie



* There is no national strategic approach across Ministries to address the holistic educational needs of children in care – a comprehensive strategic response is needed

Clarity is needed on which Ministry is responsible for leading state policy regarding children in the care of the state, and which Ministries share /have responsibility, at any level, for children in the care of the state



National Children in the Care of the State and the Education System Working Group, Letter to the Editor, Irish Times
Monday 21st September 2020

* There is a glaring gap in emotional counselling/therapeutic supports in and around schools



As CIC experience trauma, loss and attachment difficulties, there is a lack of school based emotional counselling/therapeutic supports for this and other vulnerable groups. Other additional mentoring supports in schools for these students and their carers are needed.

It is a concern that CIC may be over-represented in the suspension/exclusion groups.

Policy Gaps

DEIS 2017 - Wellbeing section a figleaf:

Need for Emotional counsellors/therapists as part of trauma focus

- This is not addressed by NEPS or Career Guidance increases

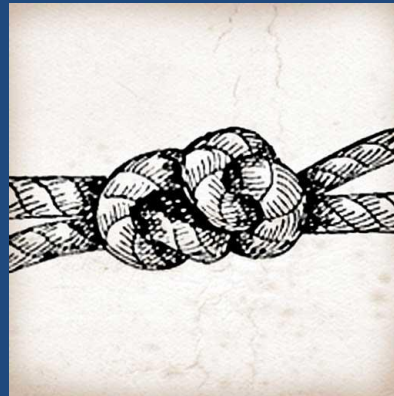
National Wellbeing In Schools Policy 2018

- 'One good adult' is no substitute for emotional counsellors/therapists
- Programme for Government's commitment to 'Improve access to supports for positive mental health in schools'
- Ireland is radically out of step with many European countries such as for example, Czech Republic, Belgium, Sweden, Slovenia, Estonia and Germany who all provide these services in schools. Croatia and Bulgaria even have legislation in place that provides for emotional counselling (Donlevy Day Andriescu & Downes 2019)



A category for children in care is absent in the Department of Education and Skills databases of POD (Primary Online Database) and PPOD (Postprimary Online Database). Whole school plans must provide evidence of addressing the needs of CIC.

A stated policy on school admissions and CIC is required, cognisant of the need to uphold children's rights to privacy.



CIC need recognition as a distinct group as part of a higher education access strategy.

The Scottish Government has recently announced the removal of the 26-years age cap on the care-experienced student bursary in time for the start of the 2020-21 academic year. People with experience of care often do not feel ready to start further or higher education immediately after leaving school –this will support them into either further or higher education at whatever point in life they feel they are ready, regardless of their age.



References

Donlevy, V., Day, L., Andriescu, M & Downes, P. (2019). *Assessment of the Implementation of the 2011 Council Recommendation on Policies to Reduce Early School Leaving* EUROPEAN COMMISSION Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture Schools and Multilingualism