

The Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA) welcomes Minister Katherine Zappone's statement that every young person leaving care will have a right to an aftercare plan from 1st September 2017

Friday 12th May 2017: IFCA has advocated for and worked with Tusla on the development of an aftercare policy for many years and welcomes the rollout of the Aftercare Policy 2017. The appointment of additional aftercare workers is essential to ensure delivery of the Aftercare service but resources will also be required to ensure young people have access to services and supports they need to transition to independent living.

Catherine Bond, IFCA CEO, stated "A full needs assessment needs to be undertaken of every young person moving from alternative care to independence. In considering the needs of young people, where possible, both the social and emotional needs should be assessed. If a young person has a disability, Tusla should ensure that all young persons who require additional needs and support are linked into the relevant disability adult services and that the transition is planned, executed and signed off by Tusla and the relevant responsible body for the continuing care of the young person".

IFCA recommends that where a young person on reaching the age of 18 years who is of limited capacity and is in receipt of disability services, transitions to aftercare, and where the foster carer continues to care for them in their home, the foster carer should receive a carer's allowance, (which is non-taxable and non-means tested), to enable them to continue to care for the young person.

Catherine Bond added "The initiation of such planning should commence following the junior cert examination cycle or equivalent, or at the age of sixteen. Recent consultations with young people highlighted their stress with both leaving care and sitting state exams happening simultaneously¹".

The leaving care plan should involve all those involved with the child, in particular their foster carers, to identify the current and continued supports to travel with the child and what additional supports are required to enable them transition to independent living successfully.

IFCA also recommends that the role played by foster carers who continue to support young adults beyond alternative care be recognised and valued. In many instances, the foster family may provide the most stable relationship in the young person's life and will invariably have been instrumental in preparing the young person for transition to adulthood. Where a young person elects to remain living with the foster carer and where the foster carer agrees to continue to provide a home environment for the young person, and where the young person is not in receipt of an income, the foster carer should continue to receive financial aid to provide for such situations. The "rent a room" tax exemption should be offered to foster carers who continue to care for young people beyond the age of 18 years.

Ends

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¹ Children's Rights Alliance 2015

