

PRESS RELEASE

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YAP Ireland Response to the Independent Child Death Review Group Report

Youth Advocate Programmes (YAP) Ireland are deeply concerned about the findings of the report published yesterday into the deaths of 196 children in care, aftercare and known to Child Protection Services in the HSE during the period 2000 to 2010. We offer our heartfelt sympathies to the families and carers of those children and young people.

Siobhán O'Dwyer, CEO YAP Ireland said in response to the report, "I am deeply saddened by the report and the fact that a large amount of the information in the report is not a surprise to us. We work with children, young people and families/carers who are experiencing difficulties in their lives and we achieve very positive outcomes for the majority of young people with whom we work. The report highlights many of the issues that concern us on a daily basis; 1) lack of appropriate placements for adolescents including those older young people who move to semi or independent living; 2) children and young people being seen as bad or wrong in some way; 3) the level of alcohol and drug misuse in families and by young people themselves; 4) young people having to fit the services and services not being flexible to the needs of very vulnerable young people."

Ms. O'Dwyer added: "Services need to be adolescent friendly, strengths based and needs led so that young people do not feel stigmatised and blamed. It is a credit to the State that the majority of children in the care system are looked after by foster carers; it is also shocking that for the small number who do need alternative placements there are so few appropriate, safe homes for them to live. It is very difficult for a young person to address the issues affecting them, change their behaviour and achieve their goals when they do not have a safe place to sleep at night."

"We will continue to work with the HSE, the new Child and Family Support Agency, child and adolescent mental health, education, youth justice and community and voluntary organisations to provide strengths based, needs led, outcomes focused services to children, young people and families. The focus of all agencies must be on putting the needs of the child first, being flexible, strengths based, needs led, available and above all, caring – children and young people in difficulty deserve nothing less."

YAP Ireland welcomes recommendations in the report for greater inter-agency and inter-departmental links to address the wide and complex issues affecting many young people in care. The setting up of the Child and Family Support Agency from January 2013 is also commended. The voice of the child is paramount to ensure that their individual needs are addressed. YAP Ireland welcomes the Constitutional Referendum on children's rights this autumn which will ensure that the best interests of the child are taken into consideration.

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Note for editors

Youth Advocate Programmes (YAP) Ireland is a leading provider of intensive support programmes for young people and families. YAP Ireland uses a strengths based, family focused approach for young people with very complex needs leading to positive outcomes for the young people, their families and referral agents.

YAP Ireland was established in Ireland in 2002 in the areas of North Dublin, Galway, Roscommon and Mayo using a US based support model, YAP Inc. We are a registered charity and in 2011, we offered 475 places to young people and their families across 12 counties.

For more information on YAP Ireland please visit: www.yapireland.ie