

Annual Review on the Adequacy of Child Care and Family Support Services Available - 2023

Referrals to Child Protection & Welfare Services

1

- 91,924 referrals in 2023, 11% (9,069) more than 2022. Increasing trend
- 8 referrals for every 100 children living in Ireland¹
- 60% (54,721) welfare concerns, 38% (34,928) child protection concerns, 2% (2,275) not recorded
- 1 in 3 referrals from gardaí – most common source of referrals

Cases Open to Social Work

2



- 22,082 cases open at year end³
- <2% of the child population being assessed or in receipt of a social work service
- 76% (16,751) of cases allocated to a social worker
- 5,331 (24%) cases awaiting allocation, 782 (13%) fewer than 2022
- <1 in 10 (448) cases awaiting allocation high priority
- 56% (2,996) of cases awaiting allocation were “active on duty”⁴

3

Children “active” on the CPNS

- 962 children “active” on the CPNS – Child Protection Notification System at year end; 117 (14%) more than 2022
- 83% (796) of children “active” were active for no longer than 12 months



First time admissions to care

5

- 634 children came into care for the first-time in 2023, 32 (5%) fewer than 2022 (666)⁵
- Equivalent to about 5/10,000 children living in Ireland

4

Total admissions to care⁹

- 892 admissions to care in 2023; 79 (10%) more than 2022 (813)⁵
- 18% (161) of admissions were 15-17 years
- 51% (458) of admissions were under a court order; 49% (434) were voluntary (agreement with parents/guardians)
- 81% (724) of admissions were to foster care, 4% (40) to residential care, 14% (128) to “Other” care placements⁶

Children in care⁵

7



- 5,615 children in care at year end, 11 (<1%) fewer than 2022. Decreasing trend
- Equivalent to about 5/1,000 children living in Ireland
- 90% (5,034) of children were in foster care, 7% (410) in residential care and 3% (171) in “Other” care placements
- 83% (4,657) were under a court order, 17% (958) were voluntary (agreement with parents/guardians)
- 15% (828) of children in care were with private providers, 15 (2%) more than 2022. Increasing trend.
- 97% of children 6-15 years and 93% of 16-17 year olds were in full-time education (in accordance with their care plan)

6

Discharges from care¹⁰

- 884 discharges from care in 2023, 11 (1%) more than 2022⁵
- 52% (458) of discharges were young people turning 18 years
- 67% (305) of young people turning 18 years remained with their foster family, about one in eight (59; 13%) moved to independent living

8

Foster carers

- 3,856 foster carers on the panel of approved foster carers at year end, 111 (3%) fewer than 2022
- 173 general and relative foster carers approved in 2023
- 94% (3,014) of general & relative foster carers had a link (social) worker at year end

9

Aftercare

- 2,904 young people in receipt of aftercare services at year end, 45 (2%) fewer than 2022
- 75% (1,676/2,228) of 18-22 year olds in receipt of aftercare services were in education/accredited training
- 96% (2,129) of 18-22 year olds in receipt of aftercare services had an aftercare plan
- 90% (2,088) of those assessed as needing an aftercare worker had one

10

Family Support Services



- At least 47,260 children referred to family support services in 2023; 19,792 children in receipt of family support service at year end⁸
- Equivalent to about 4% of children living in Ireland
- 64% (30,092) of children referred in 2023, received a service
- 2,492 Meitheal processes requested in 2023, 172 (7%) more than 2022 (2,320)
- 84% (2,095) of Meitheal processes requested in 2023 proceeded to Stage 2 (discussion stage – the Meitheal is considered to be initiated at this point).

11

Adoption Services

- 230 applications for assessment as adoptive parents in 2023, at least 184 applications in 2022⁷
- 225 new children referred for adoption in 2023, at least 181, children referred in 2022⁷
- 176 adoption assessments presented to local adoption committees in 2023, 22 (14%) more than 2022 (154)⁷. Local adoption committees make a recommendation to the Adoption Authority of Ireland.

12

Service for Separated Children Seeking International Protection (SCSIP)

- 530 referrals to Service for SCSIP in 2023, 67 fewer than 2022 (597)
- 432 new children admitted to care /accommodated in 2023, 154 (55%) more than 2022 (278)
- 330 children in care /being accommodated at year end, 135 (69%) more than 2022 (195)

¹ More than one referral can be received for a child.

³ Open cases include all children going through the preliminary enquiry/assessment process, children requiring social work support including children in care.

⁴ Active on duty means cases being progressed by dedicated duty teams or rotating social workers on a duty roster e.g., children being visited, initial assessments being completed, child in care reviews taking place.

⁵ Separated Children Seeking International Protection not included in figures.

⁶ “Other” includes supported lodgings, disability unit, drugs and alcohol rehabilitation centre, special emergency arrangements, detention centre etc.

⁷ Data for 2022 partial – data from one service not available for Q4 2022.

⁸ Based on a response rate of 86%.

⁹ Data is a count of admissions and not individual children; a child can have more than one admission in a reporting period.

¹⁰ Data is a count of discharges and not individual children; a child can have more than one discharge in a reporting period.