

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Treoir's Kinship Care Ireland responds to RTÉ documentary *Inside the Care System*

“One week in emergency care costs more than a year of kinship care.”

Last night's RTÉ documentary *Inside the Care System* has brought into sharp focus the realities facing some of Ireland's most vulnerable children and the urgent need to act.

Treoir's Kinship Care Ireland said the programme was “heart-wrenching, necessary, and impossible to ignore.”

But behind the stories lies a stark truth: Ireland is underinvesting in the very families who prevent children from ever entering that system.

Kinship carers - grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and family friends, are quietly caring for an estimated 12,000 children across Ireland. Their care keeps children connected to their families and communities and prevents thousands from entering State care each year.

Yet this care remains largely unsupported.

The Guardian's Payment for kinship carers is just €237 per week, €12,300 a year per child, almost half the Foster Care Allowance, and it reaches only 22% of children in kinship care, leaving the majority of these families without the support needed to care for children safely and sustainably. By contrast, Special Emergency Arrangements cost over €14,000 per week per child.

Grandparents are raising grandchildren on fixed pensions during a cost-of-living crisis. Other relatives are cutting back or leaving work entirely to care for children in crisis.

Spokesperson for Kinship Care Ireland, Laura Dunleavy, said:

“We are speaking with grandparents forced into impossible choices, wanting to care for a second or third grandchild, but simply unable to do so without basic State supports like adequate income, medical cards, or therapeutic services.

How does a grandmother decide which child she can take in? What does that do to a family and what does it ultimately cost the child?”

She continued:

“We know kinship care leads to better outcomes for children, that it is more sustainable and cost-effective. Yet it remains the least resourced part of the system.”

Kinship Care Ireland acknowledged the immense pressure facing frontline services and the commitment of those working within them.

“We work closely with colleagues in Tusla. They are making difficult decisions in a system that is not resourced to meet the level of need and that must be recognised.”

“There is a real and important opportunity now,” the spokesperson said.

“The way to reduce reliance on emergency placements is clear: invest earlier, in families, and in kinship care.”

Every child who can safely remain within their family network is a child who may never need to enter State care - providing stability while easing pressure on the system.

“This is not just a funding issue, it is a question of priorities,” the spokesperson added.

“Do we continue to spend in crisis, or do we invest in what we know works?”

The organisation is calling for a response across State Departments to:

- Invest in prevention and early family support
- Properly resource kinship care as a first option in alternative care
- Resource and support kinship care akin to foster care, valuing the important role kinship care plays as a family-first response
- Ensure that all children who cannot remain with parents are supported equitably across the continuum of care and that their rights are realised

Kinship Care Ireland is urging policymakers to carry the lessons of this week into upcoming Budget discussions.

“With the right investment, we can strengthen prevention, support families earlier, properly resource kinship and foster carers, and ensure high-quality residential care when it is needed. This is an opportunity to build a system that is balanced, sustainable, and capable of responding to every child’s needs without defaulting to crisis.”

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