



IRISH FOSTER CARE
ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL HELPLINE &
ADVOCACY SERVICE

Irish
Foster Care
Association

IFCA's National Helpline and Advocacy Service

The Irish Foster Care Association's National Helpline and Advocacy Service offers independent and professional support to the foster care community. The aim of the service is to offer the best and most appropriate support during challenging times by providing clarity and guidance for all those involved in foster care. The service is confidential, responsive and personal.

Emotional Support: Fostering is complex and issues such as placement endings, whether planned or unplanned, including responding to allegations or complaints can be very distressing for everyone involved. Telephone support and a listening ear are a fundamental part of the service as well as assistance in sourcing a range of resources to relevant appropriate services.

Advocacy: Provides independent and objective advice, ensuring foster carers are adequately informed of their rights. Practical assistance with regard to understanding and responding to written reports and ensuring foster carers are well represented and engaged in the process. IFCA also advocates for changes and improvements in foster care through its analysis of recurring trends and its work with relevant statutory bodies.

Information: IFCA's national helpline and advocacy service can provide assistance on a wide range of fostering issues. Many questions can be answered in the moment but in the instance of more complex queries, the support team will research the most appropriate response and source the most useful resources. IFCA has a wide range of information leaflets on a number of specific topics available on www.ifca.ie. We are also continually adding relevant resources to our **Knowledge Bank** which can be found on our website.

IFCA's National Helpline Service

The Irish Foster Care Association provides a telephone and email helpline from Monday to Friday from 11am to 3pm.

Telephone Helpline: (01) 458 5123
support@ifca.ie

This service is the first point of contact for foster carers and all those with a query or question about fostering.

The service is designed to assist all foster carers experiencing difficulty by:

- Providing an objective, non-judgemental, and supportive environment in which to discuss and explore issues of concern
- Providing balanced, good quality advice and information regarding all aspects of foster care
- Facilitating improved communication and dialogue between all concerned
- Assisting foster carers in identifying constructive strategies for resolving their concerns
- Supporting carer confidence in working towards positive solutions.

Our helpline team can be foster carers themselves and therefore have experience fostering. All IFCA helpline and advocacy staff have completed a Certificate in Counselling & Psychotherapeutic Skills & Practice course.

Tusla - Child and Family Agency, now operate an Emergency Fostering Support Service for foster carers, 365 days a year 6pm - 7am Mon - Fri and 9am - 5pm and 6pm - 7am Sat, Sun and Bank Holidays. Tel: 1890 800 511.

IFCA's National Advocacy Service

At IFCA we understand that you may need support to carry out your foster caring role. We believe that situations such as allegations, communication breakdowns and placement disruptions require additional support, guidance and sensitivity. Our dedicated team of advocacy workers will work with you to ensure that you feel acknowledged, understood and supported to respond in difficult situations. We will also if necessary direct you to resources relevant to your situation. Our approach is based on collaboration, communication and encouragement, above all we will focus on promoting your ability to advocate for yourself. We believe that preparation and reflection is key to ensuring that you can effectively represent your views and concerns.

IFCA's Advocacy Team can support you to:

- Understand what is happening
- Explore your views and feelings without judgment
- Support you to have your voice heard
- Safeguard your rights
- Have your views and wishes considered.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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