



Citizens **Information** Board  
*information · advice · advocacy*

# CIS Advocacy Annual Report 2019



**“I was very pleased with the help I received in CIS. I was a big burden on them as I was completely unaware of how to deal with the issues I required assistance with.”**

North Connacht and Ulster client

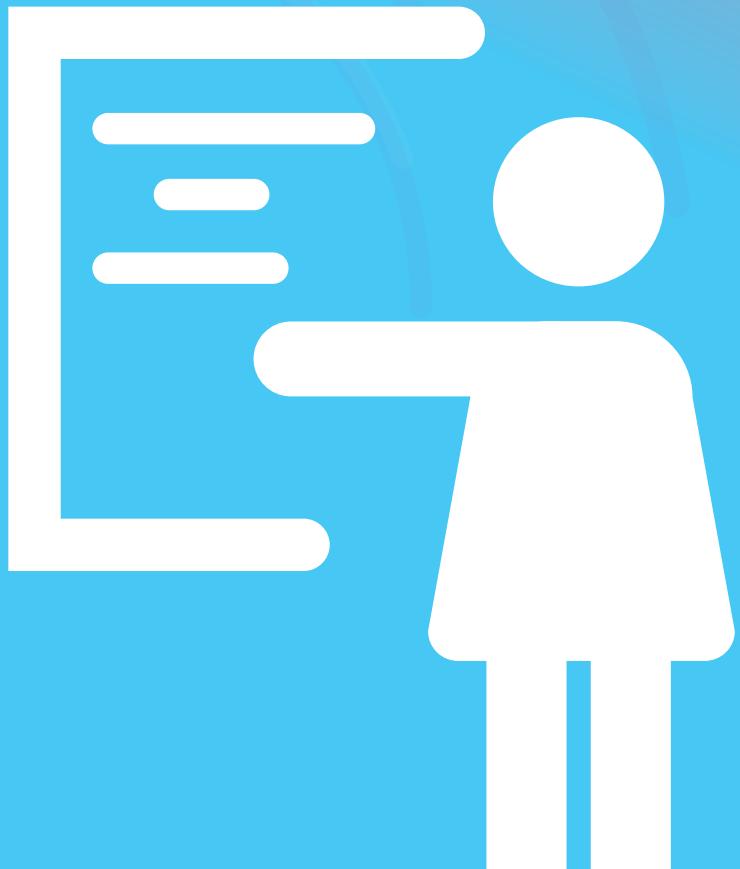


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**"I found my Information Officer very friendly, professional and efficient in the handling of my redundancy case. Everything was explained to me very well and I was very up to date with any new information obtained. From start to finish I was very happy with the service."**

**South Leinster client**



# Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this report into the advocacy work that has taken place across the Citizens Information Service (CIS) network in 2019. The report highlights the extent of the vital support provided by CIS personnel across the country. Each figure provided represents an individual who has been supported to be able to fully access their rights and entitlements.

Our CIS staff and volunteers play a crucial role in supporting the public to access their rights and entitlements. 2019 was a year of consolidation and growth for CIS advocacy, with the enhancement of systems due to the restructure of the CIS to eight regional companies becoming embedded across the network. Nationally, services saw a 2% increase in longer-term advocacy cases compared to 2018.

The launch of the national Advocacy Development Group (ADG) brought together representatives from each region and each job role, with the aim of developing advocacy consistently within all CIS centres. The group has contributed their time and expertise to great effect, with policies, processes and forms reworked to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of both service users and staff.

On behalf of everyone in the Citizens Information Board, I would like to thank all those within the CIS, both staff and volunteers, who have done so much to deliver, support, review and develop advocacy services during the year. The many case studies and positive feedback quotes within this report are testament to your dedication, hard work and skill at delivering a high quality advocacy service.



**NAOMI SELIM,**  
CIB ADVOCACY MANAGER,  
March 2020

"I really can't express my gratitude. The work you did was unbelievable and the confidence within myself that has been restored is definitely a huge deal owed to you guys. **I feel a little lighter already.**"

North Dublin client

# CIS Advocacy

Advocacy is a means of empowering and supporting people to access their rights and entitlements, get their needs met, or reach a desired outcome. This can mean a short-term engagement, such as assisting someone to write a letter or make a phone call, or a longer-term process such as preparing people for or representing them at Social Welfare Appeals and Workplace Relations Commission hearings. As you will read throughout this report, the range and level of advocacy support provided by Citizens Information Services (CIS) has continued to develop and expand year on year, with significant outcomes achieved; making a difference in the lives of people around the country.

In delivering advocacy services, CISs are meeting the statutory remit of the Citizens Information Board. This remit is set out in the Comhairle Act, 2000, Section 7 (1) as amended by the Citizens Information Act, 2007. It states that CIB will

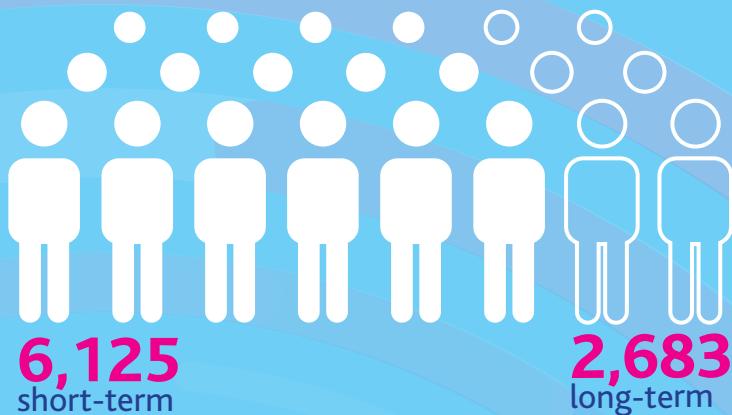
**"support the provision of or ... provide directly, advocacy services to individuals, in particular those with a disability, that would assist them in identifying and understanding their needs and options and in securing their entitlements ...".**

This is in addition to the more general function of CIB to

**"support the provision of or ... provide directly, independent information, advice and advocacy services".**

# 2019 in Numbers

**8,808**  
**TOTAL  
CLIENTS**



**35%** of all advocacy issues required long-term support

+3%  
from  
2018

**19,703**  
**TOTAL HOURS**



OVER  
30  
WEEKS  
OF WORK

# Long-term Advocacy



**65%**  
social welfare issues



**18%**  
employment issues



**8%**  
housing issues

**240**  
hearings  
attended



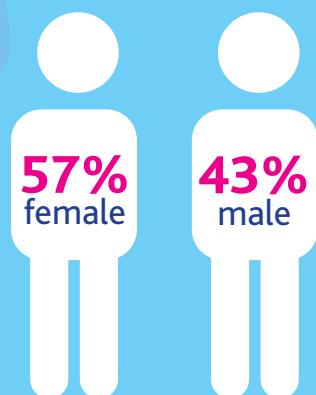
+12%  
from  
2018

112 Social welfare  
103 Workplace Relations Commission (WRC)  
16 Residential Tenancy Board Adjudication  
8 Labour Court  
1 Residential Tenancy Board Tribunal

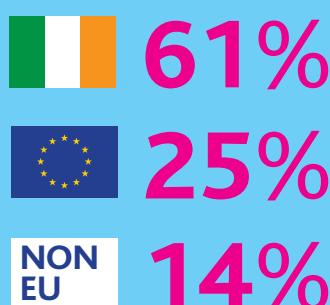
**37%**  
of LONG-TERM  
ADVOCACY  
CLIENTS have a  
**DISABILITY**



## Client gender



## Client nationality



## Client age ranges



## Short-term Advocacy

Short-term advocacy work with clients generally involves one or two engagements or actions, for example, writing a letter of complaint or negotiating a product refund.

Citizens Information Services (CISs) worked on 6,125 short-term or once-off advocacy cases in 2019<sup>1</sup> compared to 6,941 in 2018. This work took 5,733 hours in 2019 compared to 5,826 in 2018 and over 14,000 individual actions.

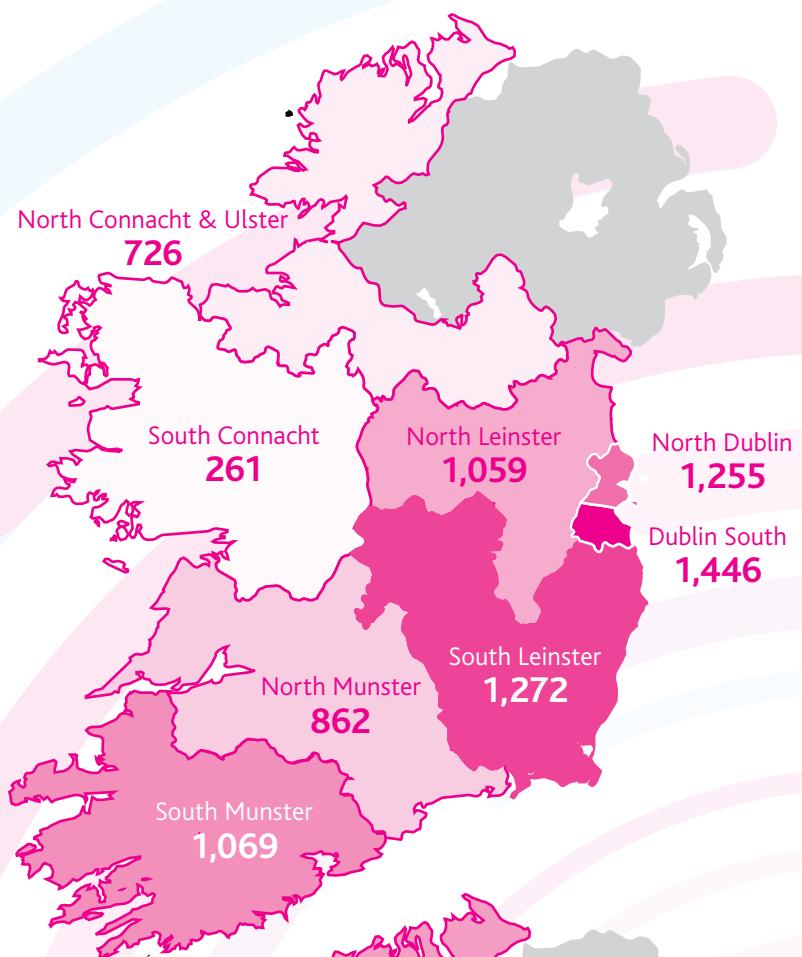
Action Taken	#	% of all Short-term Advocacy
Wrote letter or email	5,118	36%
Provided Information	4,759	33%
Prepared form(s)	2,376	17%
Phone Call	2,045	14%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,298</b>	

"I couldn't have asked for anyone better to represent me, you are a star. You **put a lot of effort into the case and organised it really really well**. Thank you very very much. I honestly do appreciate it"

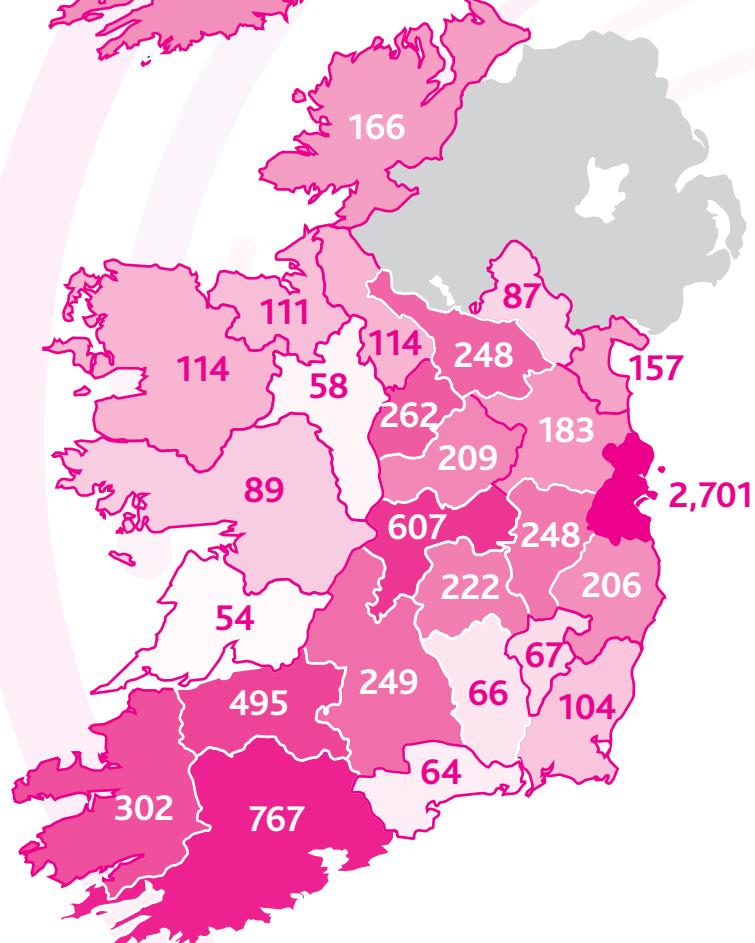
**North Connacht and Ulster client**

<sup>1</sup> This is the number of short-term advocacy records open at any point in 2019 excluding those that became long-term advocacy cases.

**2019 Short-term\***  
**Advocacy by Region**



**2019 Short-term\***  
**Advocacy by County**



\* The figures in these maps include short-term advocacy records that became long-term advocacy cases.

## Long-term Advocacy

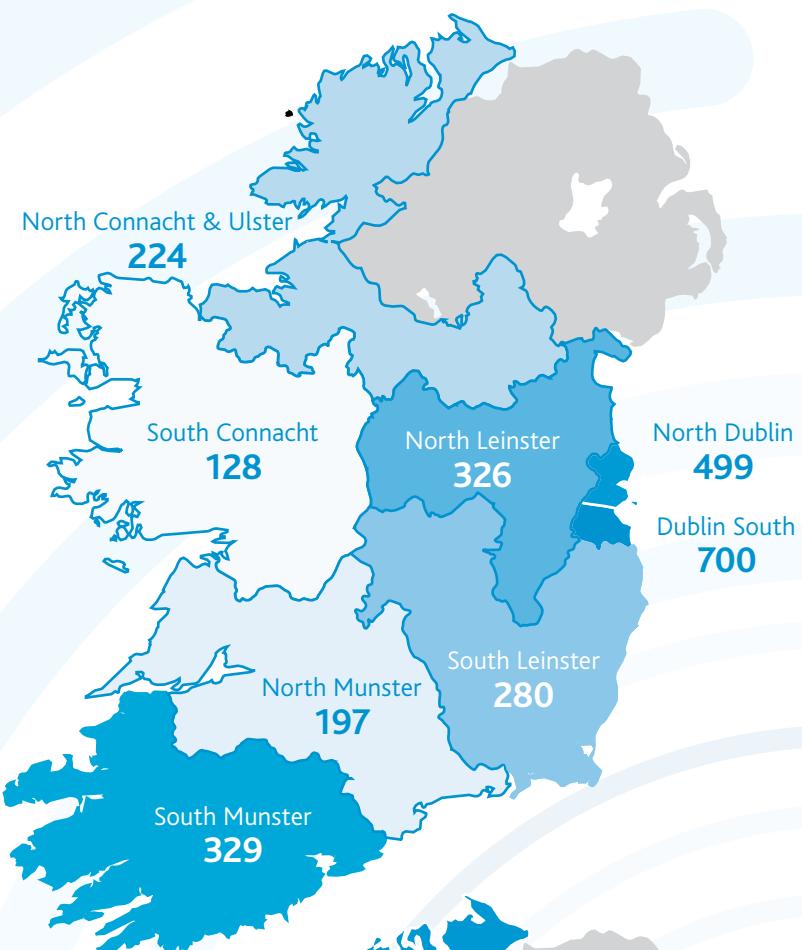
Most CIS advocacy resources are directed towards supporting clients through long-term issues or appeals, often taking up to 10 months to complete. In 2019, Citizens Information Services worked with 2,683 long-term advocacy clients on issues such as employment appeals, social welfare appeals and housing cases. This casework took 13,970 hours in 2019 compared to 14,475 in 2018.



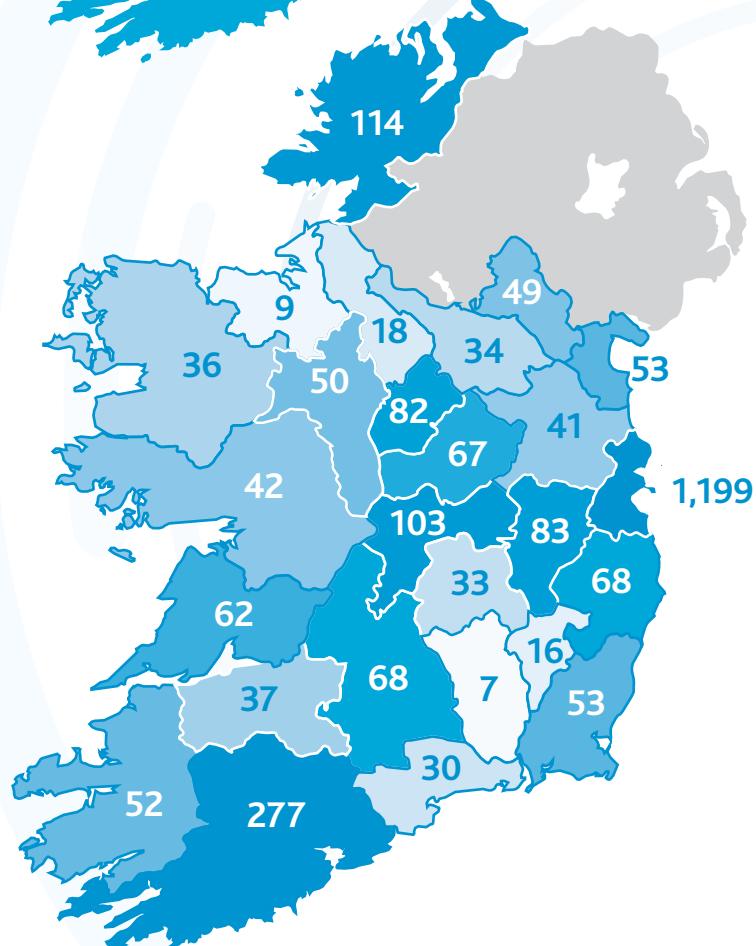
“Bhí se go maith.  
Buíochas le Dia!”

South Connacht client

### 2019 Long-term Advocacy by Region



### 2019 Long-term Advocacy by County



## How did people find their way to the CIS?

In 2019, over 80% of clients self-referred to the CIS, while 10% of people were referred by friends or family.

Referral Method	#	%
Self-Referral	2,203	82%
Friends or Family	273	10%
Other	73	3%
Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	36	1%
NGO or Community Organisation	29	1%
Another CIS or CIPS (The Citizens Information Phone Service)	25	1%
Another Statutory Organisation	23	1%
The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)	13	<1%
The National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS)	8	<1%

## Supporting People with Disabilities

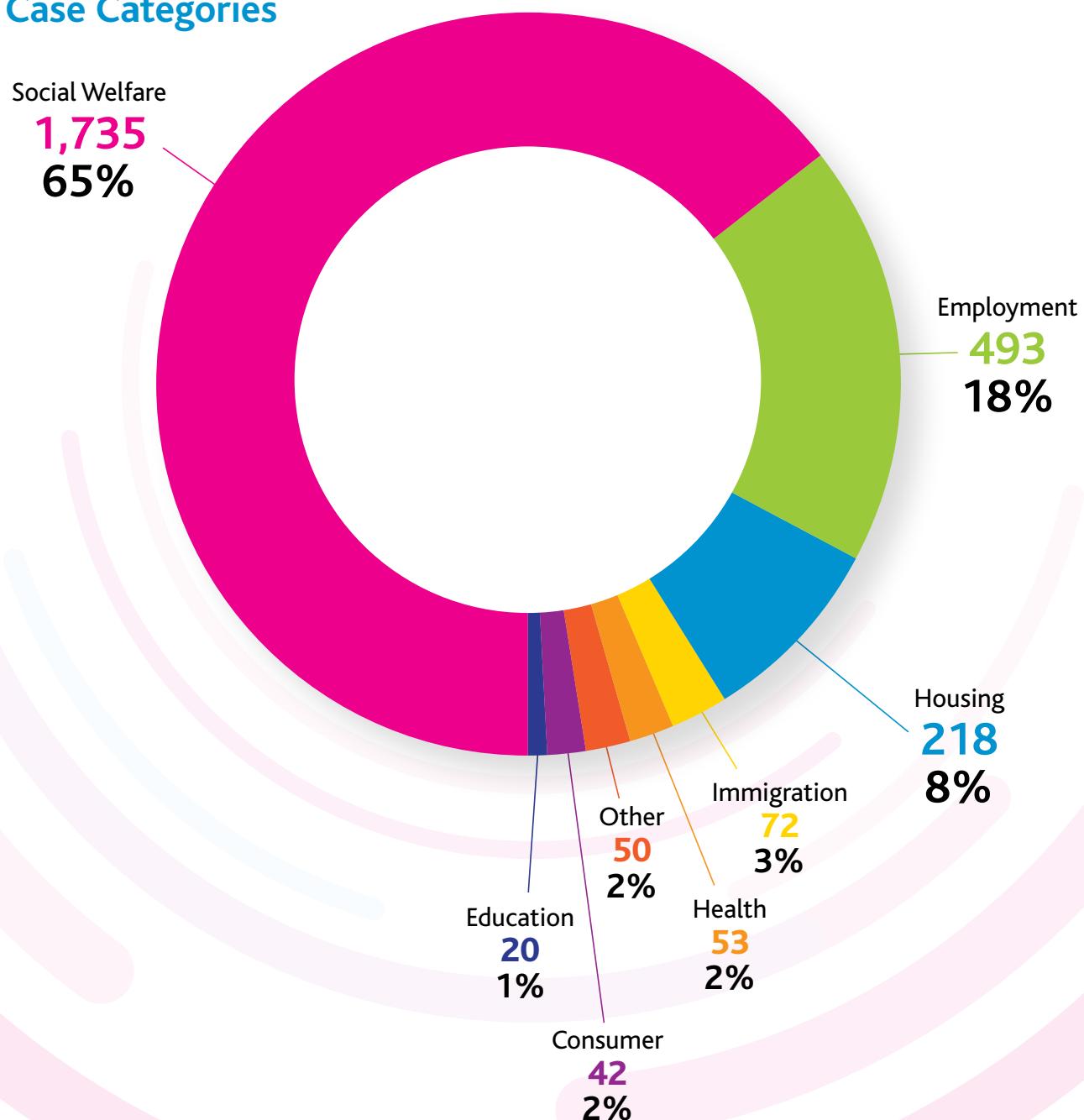
In 2019, 37% (1,203) of people supported through long-term advocacy cases were recorded as having at least one disability. This is an increase of 6% from 2018. This is significant given that disabled people make up 13.5% of the population of Ireland<sup>2</sup>.

The most common issue for people with disabilities related to medical eligibility for Disability Allowance. Disability Allowance was also the most common issue for all long-term CIS advocacy cases in 2019. Of clients who were recorded as having a disability, 49% were recorded as having a physical disability and 34% were recorded as having a mental health disability.

Disability Type	#	%
Physical	591	49%
Mental Health	409	34%
Intellectual	60	5%
Learning	50	4%
Autism Spectrum	42	4%
Sensory	36	3%
Acquired Brain Injury	15	1%

<sup>2</sup> Census 2016, Central Statistics Office

## Case Categories



# Social Welfare



The majority (65%) of cases in 2019 were social welfare related and the total number of social welfare cases increased by 15% in 2019.

Social welfare cases can involve multiple topics or social welfare payment types. The majority (28%) of social welfare cases related to Disability Allowance which accounted for 18% of all advocacy cases in 2019, making it the most common type of all cases nationally.

## Top 10 case topics

Topics	#	% change from 2018	% of social welfare cases	% with successful outcome
1 Disability Allowance	492	+24%	28%	79%
2 Carer's Benefit and Allowance	275	+7%	16%	70%
3 Invalidity Pension	244	+65%	14%	85%
4 Jobseeker's Allowance	158	0%	9%	64%
5 Domiciliary Care Allowance	75	+7%	4%	79%
6 Supplementary Welfare Allowance	67	-32%	4%	61%
7 State Pension Non-Contributory	66	+22%	4%	77%
8 Other Illness Payments	60	+46%	3%	74%
9 State Pension Contributory	54	+23%	3%	75%
10 Working Family Payment	53	-24%	3%	74%

The main issues people faced regarding these social welfare payments included medical eligibility (27% of all social welfare cases), overpayments (12%), satisfying a means test (9%), and satisfying the habitual residence condition (4%).

Medical eligibility issues were present in 50% of all Invalidity Pension cases, 44% of Disability

Allowance cases, and 29% of Carer's Benefit and Allowance cases.

Overpayments was an issue that featured across all types of social welfare cases. Of the 208 cases relating to overpayments, the majority (27%) related to Jobseeker's Allowance and issues relating to overpayments were also the main problem in 36% of all Jobseeker's Allowance cases. The other main issue presenting in Jobseeker's Allowance cases was difficulties in satisfying a means test (27% of cases).

## How did the CIS help?

Of the 935 social welfare cases completed in 2019, the interventions recorded include:

Interventions	#	% change from 2018	% of social welfare cases
1 Appeal submissions prepared and drafted	659	+42%	70%
2 Formal reviews	210	-9%	22%
3 Oral hearings attended	112	-1%	12%
4 Clients supported to attend oral hearing without CIS present	67	+29%	7%
5 Formal complaints	25	+39%	3%
6 Ombudsman complaints	12	-20%	1%
7 Legal referrals	2	-71%	<1%
8 NGO referrals	1	-83%	<1%

CIS advocates supported clients to receive the necessary social welfare payments they were entitled to by drafting appeal submissions and in some cases, attending oral hearings with or on behalf of the client. Cases involving oral hearings at which a CIS advocate was present had an 8% higher success rate than those where the CIS did not attend with the client.

# Employment



There were 493 employment cases in 2019. While the overall number of employment cases slightly decreased by 6% from 2018, there was a 34% rise in Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) adjudication hearings attended by CIS advocates.

Employment cases can involve multiple topics or issues. The majority (25%) of employment cases in 2019 related to redundancy and there was also a sharp increase in the number of unfair dismissal cases.

## Top 5 case topics

Topics	#	% change from 2018	% of employment cases	% with a successful outcome
1 Redundancy	124	+1%	25%	81%
2 Unfair Dismissal	116	+21%	24%	63%
3 Pay	115	-20%	23%	73%
4 Public Holidays & Annual Leave	19	-84%	4%	73%
5 Disciplinary Issues	17	-47%	3%	57%

## How did the CIS help?

Of the 261 employment cases completed in 2019, the interventions recorded include:

Interventions	#	% change from 2018	% of employment cases
1 Direct negotiations with employer	148	-13%	57%
2 WRC hearings attended	103	+34%	39%
3 Settlement agreements	47	-6%	18%
4 Clients supported to attend WRC adjudication hearing without CIS present	26	+13%	10%
5 Legal referrals	21	+133%	8%
6 WRC mediations	19	+12%	7%
7 Labour Court hearings attended	8	+100%	3%
8 Clients supported to attend Labour Court hearing without CIS	2	-50%	1%

Employment cases involving WRC hearings at which a CIS advocate was present had an 8% higher success rate than those at which the CIS did not attend with the client.

# Housing



The 218 housing cases made up 8% of all advocacy cases in 2019. Clients were noted as being at risk of homelessness in 30% of these cases and already homeless in 8% of cases.

## Top 3 case topics:

1. Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)
2. Eligibility for Local Authority Housing
3. Private Residential Tenancy Eviction

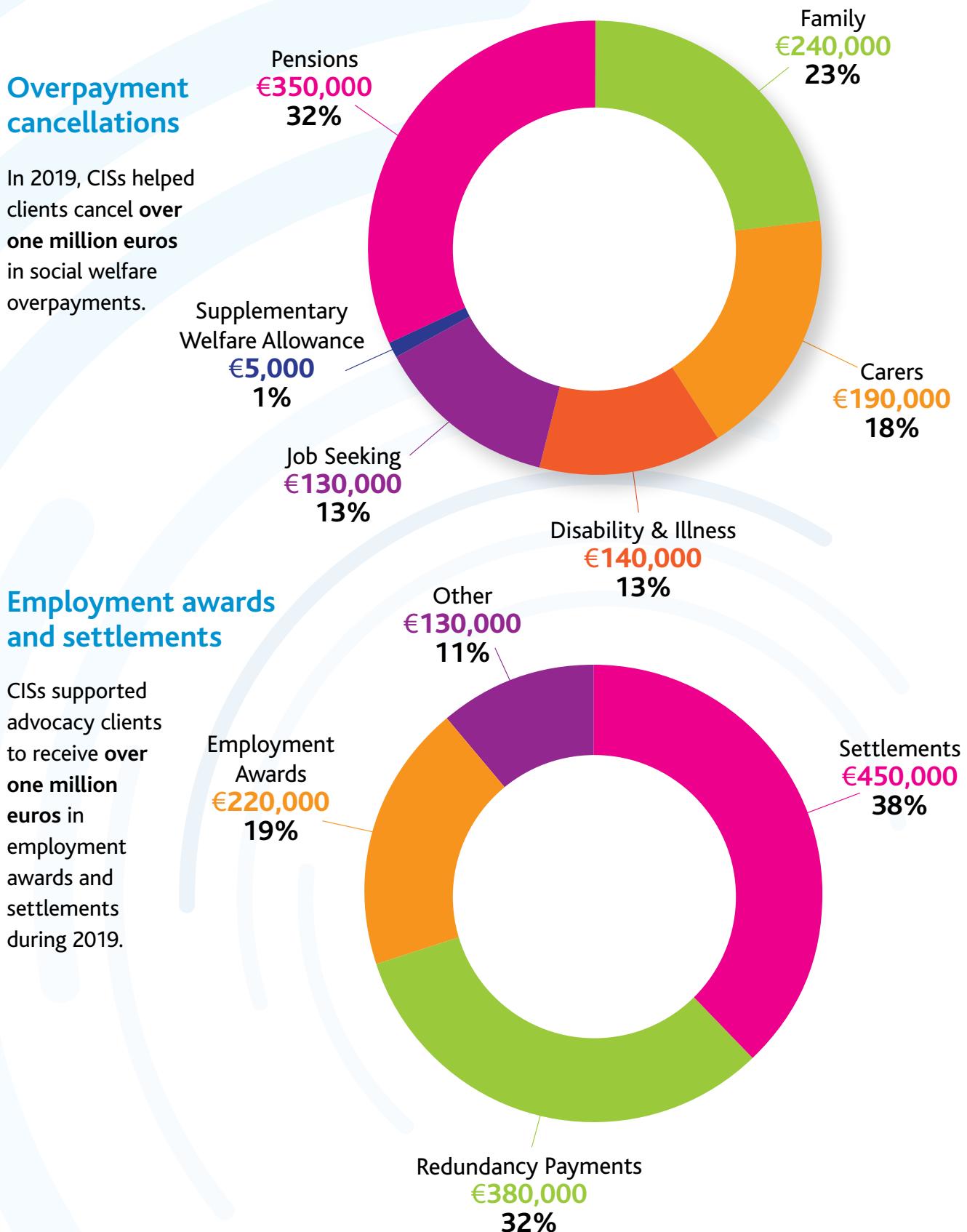
## How did the CIS help?

Intervention	#	% change from 2018	% of housing cases
Direction negotiations	88	-25%	70%
Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) Adjudication hearings attended	16	+45%	13%
Legal referrals	11	+57%	9%
Clients supported to attend RTB Adjudication hearing without CIS	10	-9%	8%
Formal meetings with CIS and local authority	5	-17%	4%
Clients supported to attend RTB Tribunal hearings without CIS	4	0%	3%
WRC (Equal Status) Adjudication hearings	4	+33%	3%
Ombudsman complaints	2	-60%	2%
NGO referrals	1	-66%	<1%
RTB Tribunal hearing attended	1	-88%	<1%

CIS advocates have prevented clients from being evicted by their landlords and supported clients to secure their place on housing lists/schemes or find more suitable accommodation through negotiating with local authorities.

In some cases it proved necessary to represent the client at Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) Adjudication hearings. Housing cases involving RTB Adjudication hearings at which a CIS advocate was present had a 36% higher success rate than those at which the CIS did not attend with the client.

# Monetary Outcomes



# Social Policy Issues in CIS Advocacy



# Social Policy Issues in CIS Advocacy

Information Providers in CISs highlighted social policy concerns in just over 10% of the 2,683 long-term advocacy cases that were dealt with by services nationwide during 2019.

Staff are asked to submit details of concerns – in the form of 'Social Policy Returns' (SPRs) – when they perceive that their client is experiencing a particular difficulty in trying to access a social or public service. This data is used to make submissions and recommendations to Government, to consultative processes and to regulators on how to improve policy and the administration of services. In many of these cases, advocacy interventions lead to successful outcomes for individual clients, as well as contributing to policy changes, which are of benefit to the wider public.

Amongst the 2,683 long-term advocacy cases that were dealt with by services during 2019, 412 social policy concerns were recorded in 284 individual cases (indicating that multiple policy issues were of concern for some clients).



Three quarters of the issues were categorised as '*operational or administrative difficulties*', whilst policy-based concerns ('*anomalies in policy*' and '*gaps and inconsistencies in provision*') accounted for the remaining quarter.

In the context of '*operational or administrative difficulties*', much of the casework relates to difficulties in progressing outcomes for clients due to administrative issues and communications with government departments . In particular, concerns were highlighted in relation to unreasonable delays in the processing of carer's and disability payment applications, reviews and appeals. In many cases, it was not uncommon for clients to experience some or all of these delays consecutively – for instance, a client may have applied for one of these benefits and had to wait through a long processing time with the initial application and have had difficulty contacting the DEASP to determine the progress of their claim. They may have been turned down in the first instance, then taken the claim to a lengthy appeal with the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

In 2019, CIB made  
15 formal policy  
submissions

Social policy feedback also flagged *delays in processing back-payments* once a decision or appeal has been granted in favour of the client.

Advocates reported on *communication difficulties* with the Central Debt Unit when dealing with such claims and cases where the Department had arranged for repayment deductions from the client which left them below the Basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) rate.

Another issue that was highlighted consistently in advocacy casework was the difficulty for clients in establishing *medical eligibility for particular payments or schemes* - in particular, for Invalidity Pension and Disability Allowance. In many of these cases, advocacy support was central in successfully appealing the initial decision.

## Impact on policy

Social policy feedback and insights provided through information/advice and advocacy casework is used by CIB to inform submissions to Government and as evidence in making the case for certain changes.

During 2019, CIB made 15 formal policy submissions, based on the policy feedback received from delivery services. In particular, input from services was central in drafting the 2020 Pre-Budget Submission – “*Meeting Basic Living Costs*” and the submission to DEASP on the new Pathways to Work Strategy. A submission to the Health Service Executive (HSE) on their Primary Care Reimbursement Strategy flagged the level of assistance and advocacy provided to people as they navigate eligibility criteria, application, review and renewal processes for medical cards.

Feedback on advocacy cases also informed a submission on the cost of *disability* and the hidden costs associated with disability. Thematic social policy reports commissioned by CIB explore issues in more depth and locate the CIS advocacy experience in the wider policy context. Many of the employment rights policy related matters flagged in advocacy casework in 2019 are taken up in the forthcoming CIB social policy report “*Employment Rights: Working For All – A Citizens Information Perspective*” which considers the gap between existing legislative protection and enforcement of rights.

The forthcoming *Lost in Transition* social policy report profiles a range of payments and schemes that are at the core of CIS advice and advocacy interventions. This report pulls together the challenges facing CIS clients at certain transition points in their lives (such as unemployment, illness, bereavement) and highlight issues for people who do not experience smooth transitions.

## Some policy wins

### Budget 2020

CIB's Pre Budget 2020 Submission (PBS) made over 45 recommendations to Government on a range of difficulties encountered by clients including areas which featured prominently in advocacy feedback, such as in-work welfare and income security and income gaps for people with disabilities, those experiencing illness and also carers.

Following the Budget, CIB's *Budget Outcomes* report tracked the extent to which CIS client concerns were reflected in Budget changes –15 of the core recommendations in the CIB PBS were addressed in some way in Budget provisions which is indicative of the impact of the work of delivery services through the country. For example:

#### Carers:

The CIB PBS highlighted that the 15 hour limit, in many cases, can restrict a carer's ability to either supplement their income or to upskill or retrain and called for an increase in the hours that recipients of Carer's Allowance are allowed to work or study whilst retaining their caring role.



Budget 2020 granted an increase in the **number of hours of work (or study)** that recipients of Carer's Allowance can engage in outside the home from 15 to 18½.

#### People with disabilities:

The CIB PBS sought the provision of increased funding for the provision of personal assistance hours, home help and home care packages and the establishment of a new homecare scheme on a statutory basis.



Budget 2020 provided an increase of €52 million in funding for the HSE's Home Support Service, to allow for the provision of an additional one million home support hours (to a total of 19.2 million). Part of this allocation will fund the piloting or testing of the proposed new Statutory Home Care Scheme during 2020.

The insight provided by advocacy work continues to offer CIB an authoritative basis to inform policy decisions across a range of areas such as social welfare, housing, health and social care services.

# Developing CIS Advocacy



# Developing CIS Advocacy

## National Perspective

There have been a number of developments within CIS advocacy during 2019 to further enhance the quality of services across the network.

### CIS Advocacy National Review and Planning Event

In February 2019, a two-day national review and planning event was held in Portlaoise, involving members of the Advocacy Support Worker (ASW) Programme Development and Management Groups, CIS Regional Managers, CIS Development Managers, the ASWs and CIB personnel. The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the learning from the delivery of advocacy so far and create a way forward to further develop services into the future.

Presentations were made by Development Managers, ASWs and representatives from the CIB Advocacy Team, in addition to facilitated workshops on effective case review, achieving advocacy standards and supporting employment and social welfare appeals. Themes discussed over the two days included ensuring nationwide consistency and synergy, achieving excellence in advocacy customer service and the cultivation of shared learning across the network.



CIS staff sharing best practice

### National Advocacy Development Group (ADG)

June 2019 saw the first meeting of the newly established CIS Advocacy Development Group (ADG). The ADG replaced the ASW Programme Development and Management Groups with one cross regional/cross role group with a remit to drive, develop and oversee the strategic development of advocacy across the CIS network.

The group's membership includes two representatives from each of the eight regional CIS companies from across a range of roles (Information Providers, Development Managers, Regional Managers and ASWs), in addition to members from CIB's Advocacy and Service Delivery teams.

The ADG is responsible for maintaining a strategic and high-level national focus on the development of advocacy services, identifying gaps in CIS advocacy standards, policies and resources. The ADG will oversee and authorise advocacy related policies and procedures. During 2019, ADG action groups worked on updating the Advocacy Service Guide, Advocacy Authorisations and the CIS Advocacy procedures.



CIS staff at the Advocacy Development Group

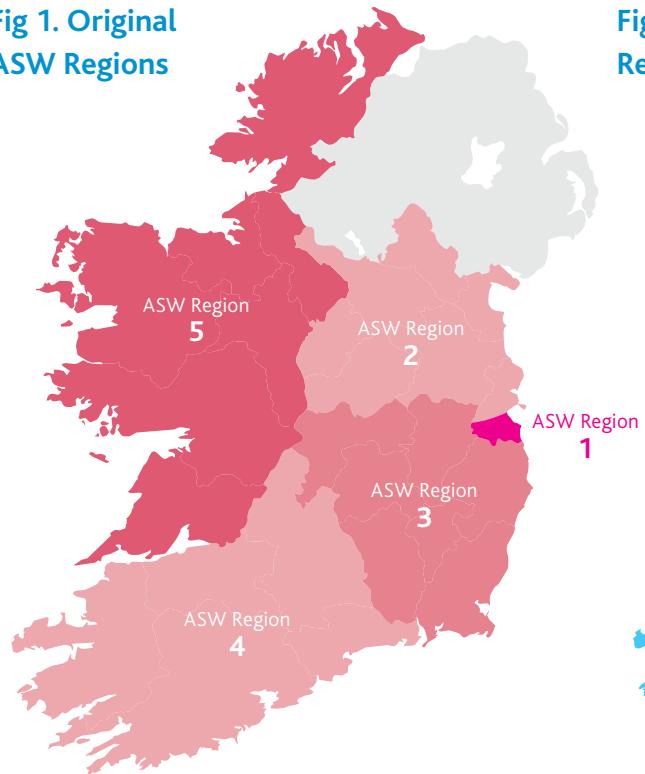
## CIS Advocacy Support Workers (ASWs)

Advocacy Support Workers (ASWs) are employed by the CISs to support the development of advocacy across the network including; supporting, training and mentoring CIS Information Providers to carry out advocacy casework; assisting CIS Development Managers to undertake effective case reviews; and supporting CIB to develop national standards, policies and procedures.

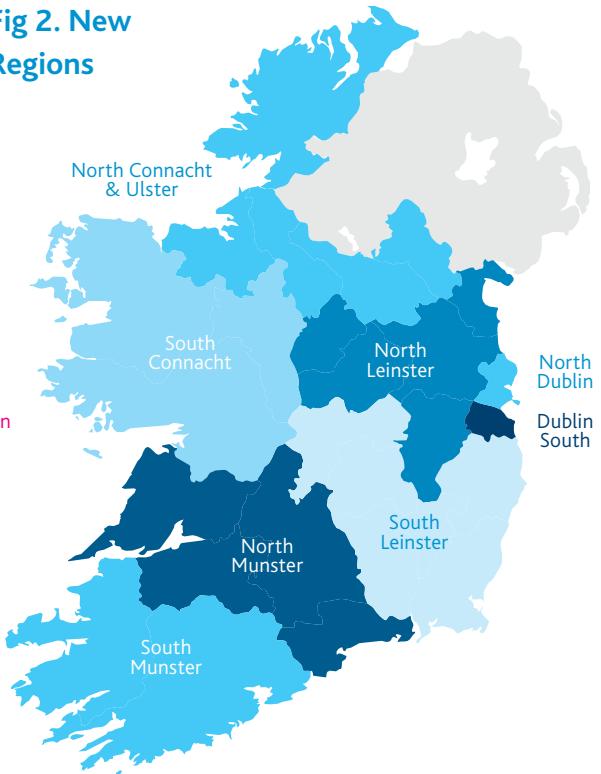
With the restructuring of the CIS services into eight regional companies, the pre-existing five-region ASW structure was no longer appropriate, with ASWs providing support across two or three regional CIS companies (See Fig. 1 & 2). These posts are critical to mitigating risk and ensuring a high-quality advocacy service offer and so in 2019 CIB secured funding for three of the regional companies to recruit additional permanent ASWs, bringing the number of ASWs working across the CIS network from five to eight.

These additional posts mean that the advocacy structure is now fully aligned with that of the newly restructured CIS companies, with an ASW employed by each of the eight CIS regional companies.

**Fig 1. Original ASW Regions**

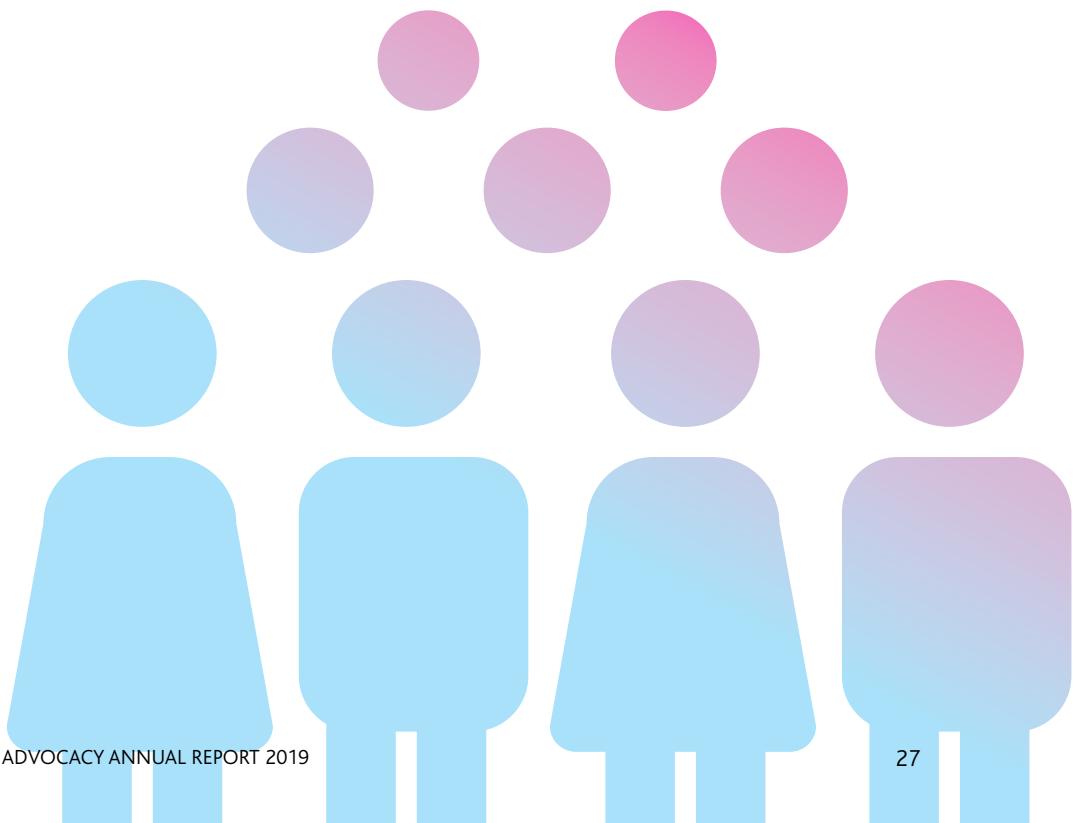


**Fig 2. New Regions**



## CIS Advocacy Newsletter

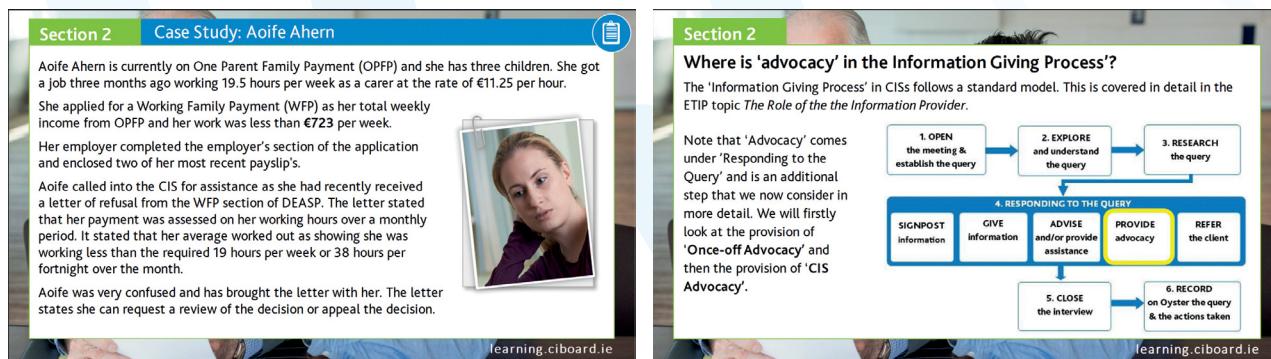
The CIS Advocacy Newsletter is produced by the Advocacy Support Workers and was distributed across the network quarterly in 2019. It includes updates on social welfare, employment, housing and immigration regulations and legislation and links to relevant casework from both within and external to the CISs in order to promote shared learning. Updates on the advocacy case management system and in-house policies and procedures are also regularly highlighted.



# Learning and Development

## E-learning

In 2019, an advocacy e-learning module was developed for the Essential Training for Information Providers (ETIP) programme which all new CIS employees and volunteers are required to complete. In 2019, 121 learners successfully completed this new advocacy module.



**Section 2 Case Study: Aoife Ahern**

Aoife Ahern is currently on One Parent Family Payment (OPFP) and she has three children. She got a job three months ago working 19.5 hours per week as a carer at the rate of €11.25 per hour. She applied for a Working Family Payment (WFP) as her total weekly income from OPFP and her work was less than €723 per week. Her employer completed the employer's section of the application and enclosed two of her most recent payslips. Aoife called into the CIS for assistance as she had recently received a letter of refusal from the WFP section of DEASP. The letter stated that her payment was assessed on her working hours over a monthly period. It stated that her average worked out as showing she was working less than the required 19 hours per week or 38 hours per fortnight over the month. Aoife was very confused and has brought the letter with her. The letter states she can request a review of the decision or appeal the decision.

**Section 2 Where is 'advocacy' in the Information Giving Process?**

The 'Information Giving Process' in CISs follows a standard model. This is covered in detail in the ETIP topic *The Role of the Information Provider*.

Note that 'Advocacy' comes under 'Responding to the Query' and is an additional step that we now consider in more detail. We will firstly look at the provision of 'Once-off Advocacy' and then the provision of 'CIS Advocacy'.

```
graph TD; A[1. OPEN the meeting & establish the query] --> B[2. EXPLORE and understand the query]; B --> C[3. RESEARCH the query]; C --> D[4. RESPONDING TO THE QUERY]; D --> E[5. CLOSE the interview]; E --> F[6. RECORD on Oyster the query & the actions taken]; subgraph D [4. RESPONDING TO THE QUERY]; D1[SIGNPOST information]; D2[GIVE information]; D3[ADVISE and/or provide assistance]; D4[PROVIDE advocacy]; D5[REFER the client]; end
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## Screenshots of the Advocacy E-Learning Course

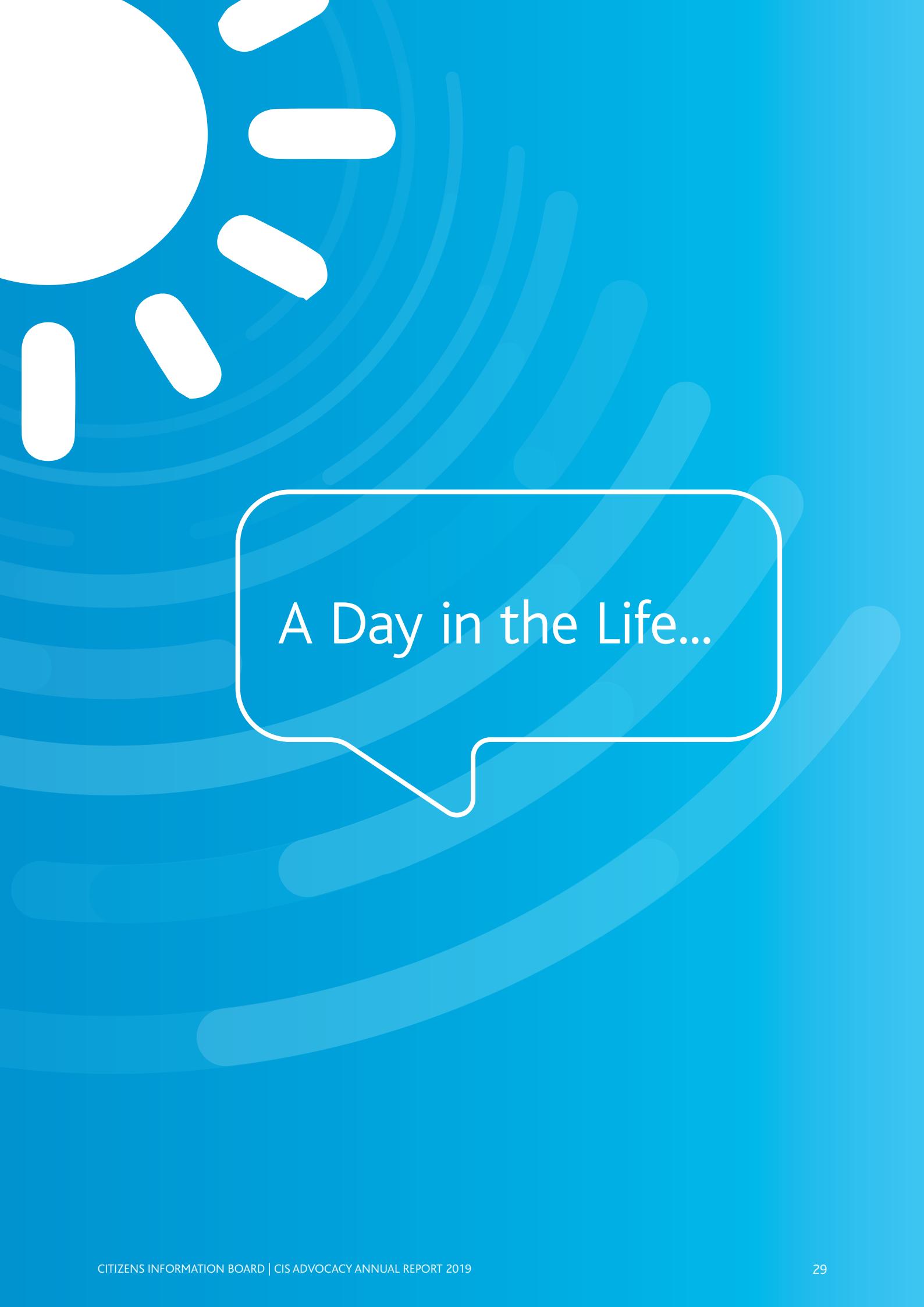
## CIB Advocacy Team's Employment Law Training Bursaries

The CIB Advocacy Team ran an employment training bursary scheme in 2019, in order to expand and enhance the employment advocacy service. Employment Law Training Bursaries were awarded to Information Officers engaged in employment advocacy casework to develop their knowledge in this area and obtain an accredited qualification. In 2019, four CIS Information Officers (IO) completed the King's Inns Advanced Diploma in Applied Employment Law. Feedback on the course was extremely positive, with IO's identifying an increased capacity to support both clients and CIS colleagues in relation to complex employment casework.

Seven new Employment Law Training bursaries were awarded in 2019, to six IO's and one ASW. Course providers included King's Inns, Carlow IT, Open College, Dublin Business School and Limerick College of Further Education.

## CIS Regional Advocacy Case Exchange Events

Throughout 2019, regional case exchange days were organised by the ASWs to enable Information Providers to share their knowledge and experience in advocacy casework. Presentations were made by Information Providers covering the context of a case, the applicable legislation and research, the advocacy plan, the case outcome and the overall learning, following which a group discussion took place. The case exchange days also included a training element, with topics such as preparing submissions, employment law housing and social welfare legislation covered, led either by an ASW or an external trainer.



A Day in the Life...

# A Day in the Life of a Volunteer

I am a Volunteer Information Provider at my local Citizens Information Centre. I volunteer for one morning each week, and give information and advice to clients with the support and encouragement of the Centre's Information Officers. I mainly assist clients who visit the office in person, although I also often give advice to clients over the phone.

- 9:00am** I am barely settled at my desk when the first call comes through. On the other end is a woman who is clearly frustrated. Her elderly mother is in desperate need of home care and, try as she might, my caller has been unable to secure any services. Her GP has advised her to contact the Public Health Nurse. But the Public Health Nurse told her that she can't carry out an assessment without a letter from the GP! Fortunately, through some online research, I am able to establish that a GP referral letter is not necessary. I provide the caller with the relevant telephone number and direct her to the HSE Home Support Service to arrange an assessment. I also offer advice on the HSE's complaints procedure, just in case she continues to be passed from pillar to post. She is pleased to receive this information and happy to pursue the matter further on her mother's behalf.
- 9:30am** My next client is already waiting when I put down the phone. He is distressed, and it is difficult to communicate with him as he has limited English. He shows me a letter, which states that his Supplementary Welfare Allowance appeal was successful. Reading through the decision letter, I learn that this man had been receiving a reduced rate of payment, and had appealed against this reduced award.

**"I want to thank you for all that you did. No one listened to me before. But when you wrote to them they had to do something. Thank you."**

**North Munster client**

The man, seeing that I look confused, offers me a piece of paper that is bundled up in his hand. It is a payment receipt dated today. He is still receiving the reduced amount despite the successful appeal, and this explains why he is so upset.

I realise that this matter might be resolved with a quick phone call to the local INTREO office. I ask the man to sign an authorisation form, allowing me to make a call on his behalf. Once this is signed, I get through to our local office and ask for the community welfare section.

The officer I speak with is reluctant to make the payment and wishes to investigate the case further, suggesting I call back in the afternoon. As I am not on duty in the afternoon I ask my colleague to follow up with the local INTREO on my client's behalf.

I record this as a social policy return to make others aware of this anomaly and the impact it is having on clients. On my next day of duty, I hear that the client has had his full payment restored. The client is delighted with the outcome and is very appreciative of our assistance.

**10:30am** My next client is also having a difficult time. She is on bail from prison, is pregnant, and her Disability Allowance payment has been suspended. She wants me to help her to have the payment reinstated now that she is on bail.

She has already been to the local INTREO office, but was told that the Prison Service would have to contact the office directly. The Prison Service are adamant that this is not their responsibility.

The client is very vulnerable, and is understandably agitated and upset. I do everything I can to put her at her ease as she tells me her story. A search of the Citizens Information website does not find any solutions for this lady, so I consult with the Information Officer on duty. She offers to speak to the client, as she thinks she will be able to assist her.

**11:30am** The Information Officer takes over the consultation and I can overhear her calling the Irish Prison Service, while I write up a social policy return.

After the client has left, the Information Officer tells me that the payment has been restored and the client is very satisfied with the assistance she received.

**12:30pm** As I only volunteer in the mornings, I finish up for the day and say goodbye to the team.

*Source: South Munster Citizens Information Service*

# A Day in the Life of an Information Officer

**9:30am** The doors in my Centre open at 9:30 and I recognise the first person in the queue. I have been advocating on his behalf since his application for Carer's Allowance was refused last year.

He has a letter from the Social Welfare Appeals Office, which he cannot understand (his English is limited). I read the letter and explain to him that his appeal has been successful. The Department will start paying Carer's Allowance to him from next Monday. I also explain to him that he is due arrears, but he won't receive an arrears cheque for a few weeks.

This is a very positive start to the day, and I feel elated that all our hard work has paid off. The client is delighted and shakes my hand.

I add a copy of the letter to the Electronic Case Management System (ECMS) and update the actions section of the file.

**10:00am** My next client left his employment following a dispute over annual leave. He says that his employer has withheld two weeks wages, as well as payment in lieu of holidays. He is frustrated because his former employer is ignoring his emails.

I explain to him that I can write to the employer on his behalf. Often, employers make payments to their employees when they have been contacted by the Citizens Information Service.

The client has documentation to show how many hours he worked, and is very clear on how much he is owed in wages. His strong recordkeeping makes it easy for me to calculate his outstanding annual leave entitlement. I do some research to establish the registered company details concerned, and I draft the letter while the man waits.

I explain to him that I can advocate on his behalf, and I inform him of how the CIS advocacy service operates. He is pleased with this, and has no issue with signing an Authority to Act and a Data Protection Consent.

Once the letter is written and a signed copy has been given to the client for his records, I advise him to call back to me if he does not receive his payment within the next two weeks. I give him my card, with my name and contact details.

While I hope that the letter will be enough to resolve this man's difficulties, I have a strong suspicion I will be seeing him again.

**11:00am** I am scheduled to relieve the Voluntary Information Provider who is covering reception today, so I take up my post on the reception desk for a busy fifteen minutes.



While there, I assist an elderly caller who has damaged her Free Travel Pass. The card reader on the bus is no longer reading her card, and she has to explain the problem to the driver each time. The last bus driver she encountered told her that she would have to get the card replaced and charged her a fare.

I call the appropriate section of the Department, as I have on many previous occasions. I know that they will want to speak to the lady herself, and she is happy to give them the details they need to send her new card by post.

**11:30am** Returning to my office, I assist a couple in completing an application for Social Housing Support. This a long, time-consuming form to complete. As our office doesn't close for lunch, I am rostered to take lunch at 12:00 and then cover reception again between 1:00 and 2:00.

**1:00pm** I am back on reception to cover lunch breaks.

A client asks for a ticket to see an Information Officer. When I ask how we can assist him, he replies that he wants help in drafting an affidavit. I consult with the Senior Information Officer to check if we provide this service. She confirms that although this service is provided in some CIS's we are not able to help on this occasion.

The client is unhappy when I tell him we won't be able to assist him, but once I have explained that we are not solicitors, he understands our point of view.

**2:00pm** I return to my office and take the next person. She has recently been awarded Refugee status and wants her spouse to join her here in Ireland.

I outline the process for applying for Family Reunification, and print off the relevant information from the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) website for her to take away.

**2:30pm** I recognise my next client immediately. I had assisted her last year when she had become estranged from her former legal guardian. I had helped her in securing her own immigration status, as well as assisting her in receiving Child Benefit on behalf of her younger brother. She is here with her brother, who I barely recognise under a thick beard.

The brother has now turned 18, and needs to secure independent immigration status to enable him to take up work. I already know everything about their history in Ireland, so the letter is straightforward.

**3:15pm** A distressed caller with limited English arrives with a letter from her local Social Welfare Office. It states that she has been refused a Jobseeker's payment on Habitual

Residence grounds. After asking the client for more details about her situation, I am convinced that the decision will be overturned on appeal.

I ask the client to complete the necessary consent and draft a letter to the Deciding Officer explaining the client's circumstances.

I also complete a Social Welfare Appeal form, requesting an oral hearing with an interpreter present.

**4:15pm** I relieve the Volunteer Information Provider on Reception for their afternoon break. As there are several clients still waiting to be seen, we agree that no more tickets will be handed out today.

**4:30pm** I take my last client of the day. She has been unable to find a GP who will accept her as a medical card patient.

I advise her to ask for refusals in writing from 3 GPs. Once she has gathered these, I promise to assist her in forwarding them to the Health Service Executive (HSE) to request that they assign a GP to her.

**5:00pm** I sign out and leave the office to go home for the day.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

**"Your staff were highly supportive with helping me with advice regarding my employer and retirement plan. I always left his office a happier person and confident that I have been heard"**

**Dublin South client**

# A Day in the Life of an Advocacy Support Worker

- 8:00am** I have an early start this morning because I am travelling to a Citizens Information Service Centre (CIC) that is a two-hour drive from my house. I get on the road as soon as I drop the kids to childcare.  
I use this time to think through the cases that I will be discussing with Information Officers this afternoon.
- 10:00am** I arrive at the CIC and meet an Information Officer (IO) who is due to attend an Oral Hearing this morning. The hearing is about her client's Disability Allowance claim, which was refused on medical grounds. The Development Manager (DM) has asked me to support the IO at the hearing, as she has not had much experience at this level.  
The IO has already prepared a submission with the support of her DM and myself, so we use the time we have before the hearing begins to run through the documents that she will use at the hearing. We then gather up our paperwork and head to the hotel where the appeal is due to be heard.
- 10:35am** In the hotel, I take 15 minutes to check my emails to see what queries are coming in from other IOs in my region. There is a query from an IO whose client is having trouble accessing foster payments – I send a quick response and make a note to deal with it when I return to my office.
- 10:50am** We meet the client in the hotel reception and go into the hearing together. The client is nervous and needs reassurance. At the client's request, the Appeals Officer allows the IO to read the submission on her behalf and to refer to supplementary medical evidence from the client's GP and Consultant. The client gets upset as the IO reads about the difficulty she has with daily tasks. The Appeals Officer thanks the IO for the detailed submission and states that he has no questions for the client as we have

"The Social Welfare system is complicated. The staff of the CIS made it more simple and much more user friendly. The CIS plays an important part."

Dublin South client

answered all of his questions in our submission. He tells the client that she will be successful in her appeal.

We leave the hearing and discuss the outcome with the client. She is relieved that it is over and thanks us for attending with her. After she leaves, I have a chat with the IO about her performance at the hearing: what she felt went well, what areas she was unsure of and what learning she could take from the experience.

**11:30am** I return to the CIS where I have arranged to meet the Regional Manager (RM) for our monthly review. We discuss the new regional advocacy support plan that we plan to roll out to all services in our region in the New Year. We also look at the regional Electronic Case Management System's advocacy figures for year-end as indicators of areas of focus into the New Year.

I update the RM on the work of the national Advocacy Development Group, interesting cases in the region and the work of the ASW team.

**1:00pm – 1:15pm** I meet with the DM briefly to discuss the Oral Hearing and to check in about any current advocacy requirements in her team of IOs.

**1:15pm – 4:00pm** I have a working lunch meeting with IOs from three different CICs for a peer-learning event. We discuss all of their advocacy cases briefly, and examine some high priority cases more closely. This meeting is an opportunity for the whole team to become familiar with all of the cases in the local area. It also promotes shared learning and confidence building within the team.

There are some queries raised during the meeting that I can answer straightaway, and others that I take away to research over the coming days.

I give the team a quick ASW news update on issues arising both in the region and nationally, such as the new process for sending basic appeals for clients and the outcome of the recent Child Benefit High Court case.

**4:00pm** I return to my car to start my journey home. I think of the cases that I need to follow up on and start planning where I will focus my research. I enjoy the silence and feel that I have used all my words for today!

*Source: North Leinster Citizens Information Service*

# A Day in the Life of a Development Manager

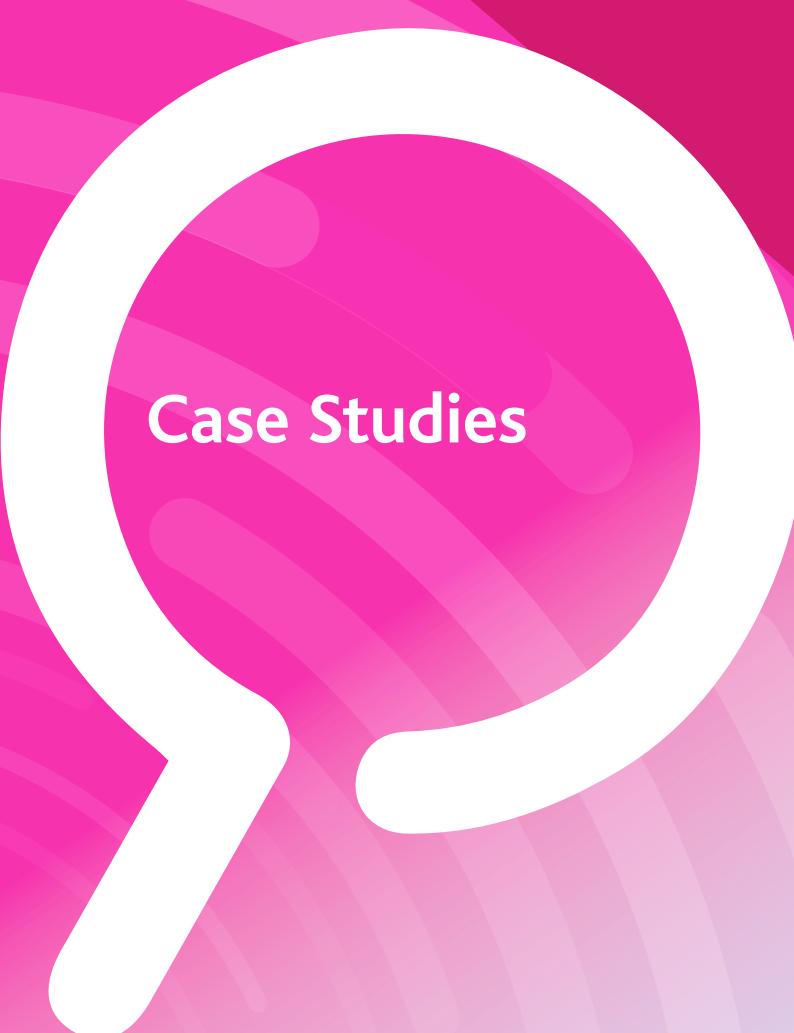
- 8:00/9:00am** My commute to work can take up to an hour or more depending on traffic, so I am usually on the road by 7:50am. Today I am at my desk for 9:00am. I manage four Citizens Information Centres which keeps me very busy.
- I make sure to say 'good morning' to the team on site for the day as I grab a quick cup of coffee.
- I turn on the computer and scan my emails and phone messages for any emergencies that may have arisen from the previous day. I touch-base with my administrator and the Citizens Information Centres (CIC) on my patch and make sure our service is fully operational.
- 10:00am** Today, I am planning to roll out a new Child Protection Policy for my services with associated training. I review the new policies and procedures and devise my half-day training session to coincide with a team meeting. I develop both the agenda and participant register so I can track the attendees, as I plan to do the training in a group setting via the Online CIB training hub. This will mean I can certify all participants in one session.
- Creating my plan and the associated presentation takes me about two hours to complete, in between phone calls from staff/centres and dealing with the post and emails. Once complete, I send out the staff agenda and the training materials to all staff, scheme workers and volunteers.
- 12:00pm** I am called into the information room to assist an Information Officer (IO) with a complex advice query. It takes me around 20 minutes to fully explore the issue with both the IO and the client and to provide advice. Following this, I return to my desk and follow up on outstanding emails that have come in this morning.
- As I have scheduled a case review with one of my Information Officers in another CIC, I leave my office at 1:30pm, arriving there at 2:10pm.
- 2:15pm** Whilst carrying out a case review in the Centre, I also carry out a quality review of short-term advocacy work. I select five random examples and review all the paperwork. I then carry out a review of ongoing long-term advocacy casework using the case review function of the case management system.
- The Information Officer I am meeting today has a substantial advocacy caseload, so it takes a couple of hours to discuss everything and agree follow up actions.

- 4:00pm** While I am there, I take the opportunity to review operations at the Centre. This involves collecting customer comment cards, reviewing health and safety issues and linking in with CE participants and volunteers. I make sure that the staff and volunteers are happy and everything is operating smoothly. This is an important part of the day so I make sure to give time to all the team members. I finish up at 4:30pm and I am on the road heading home.
- 6:00pm** I arrive home to two children and then my day really starts!!!

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

**"The help, comfort and support I got from CIS and my Advocate was phenomenal at a horrendously difficult time in my life with such awful difficulty with social welfare. I have no hesitation in stating that my Advocate definitely saved my sanity and (quite possibly my life) as I was in utter despair when I first sought help!"**

**South Munster client**



## Case Studies

All case studies have been sourced either from the Electronic Case Management System (ECMS) or directly from Information Officers. They have been minimally edited and therefore provide a varied insight into the cases that are dealt with on a day-to-day basis across the CIS network.

# Case Studies: Social Welfare

## 1. Widows Non-Contributory Pension

The client came into the CIS having been refused Widows Non–Contributory Pension on the grounds she could not provide a marriage certificate. She had explained to the department that she got married in a religious ceremony performed abroad, without the facilities for state registration and therefore no marriage certificate exists. The client had provided an affidavit to confirm this, but the department would not accept it.

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request was submitted and the CIS received the client's files from the Department of Justice and Equality. It was then noted that an application for Family Reunification was received from her husband six years prior, in respect of his wife. The application was acknowledged and a family reunification questionnaire was issued to the applicant a year later. The completed questionnaire was received back to the Department a week later, with additional documentation submitted in support of the application. The Department of Justice and Equality was then satisfied that client was married to her husband and sent a letter to this effect to the National Immigration Bureau. Details of this decision was also sent to the widows section in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection but still, Widows Non–Contributory Pension was refused.

The CIS supported the client to appeal the decision to not award her Widows Pension and represented her at the hearing. The CIS advocate researched Islamic marriage ceremonies and provided this information to the appeals officer as well as other relevant documents. After a number of weeks, the appeal officer found in favour of the client and stated in her decision, that it was the first time she heard of this type of ceremony and that she would (with clients permission) use this case and set it as precedent in other appeals. The client was very happy with the outcome and the work of the Citizens Information Service.

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

**"I recommend the CIS services to everyone because of the very nice service and human approach to people. Great people work to help solve human problems. I had psychological comfort with the problem and I was not alone. Thank you with all my heart that an institution like CIS exists."**

**North Leinster client**

## **2. Rent Supplement**

In 2017 the client was issued with an overpayment on her rent supplement claim. The overpayment letter claimed that our client's daughter had been residing with her from August 2015 until October 2017 resulting in an overpayment of €3,380 as her daughter had been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance and therefore had been assessed as a liable relative. The CIS initially requested a review of this decision by providing new information which may not have been available to the Department at the time it issued its overpayment. The CIS advocate informed the Department that the client's daughter came to Ireland in 2014 and was initially accommodated in direct provision. She was granted leave to remain in 2015 and went to live with her mother and was awarded Jobseeker's Allowance at a weekly rate of €100.

However, the landlord only allowed the daughter to stay on a temporary basis until she found alternative accommodation and the CIS submitted a letter from the landlord's agent confirming same. She subsequently moved in with a friend in May 2016, but continued to claim her payment from her mother's address. We submitted that it was accepted that our client's daughter resided with her mother from 2015 until 2016, but not until 2017 as indicated in the decision letter. Further, the CIS advocate argued that the weekly contribution from her daughter should have been €10 per week and not €30 given that she was in receipt of a reduced age related Jobseeker's Allowance claim.

The Rents Unit issued its decision partially accepting the grounds put forward in the review, they issued a revised decision reducing the overpayment from €3,380 to €1,005. However, it did not accept the claim that the weekly contribution from our client's daughter should have been €10 rather than €30. The CIS subsequently emailed the Rents Unit seeking clarification as to whether SI412/2007 had been applied and argued that €30 was not a reasonable amount to attribute. The Rents Unit advised that if we were not satisfied with this aspect of the decision that we should appeal it. The CIS submitted an appeal on behalf of the client, arguing that based on SI412/2007 that €10 was a reasonable amount to attribute to our client's daughter in respect of her contribution to the rent.

The Appeals Office issued its decision in October 2018 disallowing the appeal on the following grounds:

"In arriving at a decision in this case I have considered the appeal file, the grounds of the appeal and the relevant legislation. The legislation provides that the decision maker may attribute an appropriate amount of means in relation to the income of non-dependant relatives. This assessment is consistent with the means assessment applied in all similar circumstances and



I have decided that the appellant is correctly assessed with €30 means attributable to her daughter. Consequently, the appeal is disallowed."

Client was satisfied to have had the overpayment reduced by over €2,000 and the case was closed.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

### **3. State Pension Non-Contributory**

Client attended the CIS as he was struggling to make ends meet and was unable to afford his rent. His source of income was a reduced state pension; he had previously been self-employed and his contributions only gave him a reduced pension. He applied for State Pension Non Contributory which was refused on the basis of not furnishing information in relation to his self-employment. With the assistance of the CIS, the client was able to have this decision overturned and he was awarded a full-rate State Pension Non Contributory. With the support of the CIS, he applied and was eligible for a council flat, which he was able to afford. The CIS also supported him to apply for Household Benefits and Fuel Allowance payments. He was very happy with the service offered and wrote a thank you letter expressing his gratitude.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

### **4. Carer's Allowance**

The client came to the CIS having applied for Carer's Allowance and been refused; she asked for help to appeal the decision. The CIS requested her file under Freedom of Information (FOI) and subsequently sent in a notice of appeal. The CIS advocate advised the client to get up to date medical reports and to complete a daily diary of the care provided to the person she cared for. Once complete, the advocate gathered all the information and wrote a detailed appeal submission, as well as submitted a request for an interpreter as client had poor English.

The CIS advocate attended the appeal hearing in case any information was lost in translation. This was very helpful as just having a translator who has no real knowledge of the case or of social welfare was not enough. The appeal was successful and the client received a payment backdated to time of application, which resulted in a payment of €1,635.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## **5. Disability Allowance**

The client was referred to the CIS by a mental health social worker as her illness benefit was due to cease and she was very stressed regarding payment options. She had struggled with anxiety and depression for many years and she had been hospitalised following a breakdown. The CIS advocate discussed her options regarding Disability Allowance and Invalidity Pension and agreed that the service would support her with applications. Following a Freedom of Information (FOI) request we received her PRSI record and discovered she did not have enough contributions to receive a standard Irish Invalidity Pension. As the client had previously worked abroad, we supported her to write to the Invalidity Section requesting that the payment be reviewed based on her EU record, in order to understand the impact that would have. The CIS then supported her with an application for Disability Allowance when her husband moved to part-time work due to health problems.

There were very long delays in the processing of the EU Invalidity Pension; we made contact on numerous occasions to establish the status of the application. After twelve months the client received a decision awarding an Invalidity Pension of €119.30 plus €22.70 for her husband. She is happy with this outcome. In addition, the CIS supported the client with a medical card application.

*Source: North Leinster Citizens Information Service*

## **6. Carer's Allowance**

The client had to leave secondary school when she was 16 years old to care for her mother full-time who had numerous disabilities and could not care for herself; she applied for Carer's Allowance and was turned down as she was only 16 years old. She then re-applied for Carer's Allowance when she turned 18 and was refused on medical grounds. The client came to the CIS as she wanted to appeal the decision and wanted someone to advocate on her behalf. The CIS advocate requested the clients files through a Freedom of Information Request (FOI) and met with her to discuss her grounds for appeal.

The client was advised to get letter from the GP stating the details of her mother's disability as well as letters for hospital appointments, any specialist visits and reports as well as photos of her mother who was confined to a wheelchair. Lastly, the advocate suggested the client write up a report about a day in her life as a carer for her mother. All of this information was submitted as an appeal and the clients appeal was awarded and she received €6,000 in back-pay.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## **7. Illness Benefit**

The client attended the CIS following an injury at work. She had very little English and needed her son or her husband with her to translate. Her employer would not sign the Injury Benefit form to confirm that the accident had happened at work. The client had contacted the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) again after about 2 months and was told by them to stop sending in medical certificates as she was not eligible for a payment. It appeared that this was because the employer did not agree it was an accident at work and she was not eligible for Illness Benefit as she only had 62 paid contributions.

Eventually the matter was investigated by a Social Welfare Inspector and it was deemed to be an occupational injury. The client then received a letter stating that she was entitled to Injury Benefit for nine weeks and she was paid the arrears. However, the client was not happy as Injury Benefit lasts for 26 weeks. She wrote a letter to DEASP to this effect, but they responded saying that as she was outside the 26 week period she was not entitled to any more payment.

The CIS advocate drafted a detailed submission explaining it had taken almost three years to decide if it was an occupational injury, as well as to highlight that the client may have had an entitlement to Illness Benefit if they made contributions in another EU country.

After a long process, the client received a letter from DEASP granting her the remaining weeks and received a payment of €3,133.30 in arrears. It stated that she had only 62 paid contributions in Ireland but did not mention anything about checking her EU record. The CIS advocate then spoke further to the client about their job overseas and learnt that she worked cash in hand, so the advocate explained that she would not have an entitlement to Illness Benefit.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## **8. Contributory Pension**

The client attended the CIS for assistance with benefits. Her husband had died 2 years prior and she did not have a pension, she did have some assets, but could not use them due to a very complex probate situation. Her late husband, accountant and solicitor had all told her she was not eligible for any pension. The CIS worked through all possible scenarios of what she may be entitled to and made the application on her behalf.



Finally, she received Contributory Pension of €119 per week with €44,000 backdated. She is delighted and was exceptionally grateful for the intervention of CIC in her case. She had been living on her savings for years and was really struggling so this pension of €119 per week will greatly improve her situation.

*Source: North Munster Citizens Information Service*

## **9. Domiciliary Care Allowance**

The client came to the CIS as she had received a notice to quit and was seeking medical priority on her housing application with the local authority. The CIS advocate discovered that she cares full-time for her husband as well as one of her sons. She was not on any carers payment having applied more than a year previously for caring for her husband and been refused. At that time, her son had started exhibiting symptoms of his condition so she felt that she did not have the time or capacity to pursue an appeal.

The CIS applied for a carers payment on her behalf, as well as for Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA). The application for the carers payment in respect of her husband was refused but granted on appeal following an oral hearing. The applications for the carers and DCA payment in respect of her son were successful but the CIS appealed the date of award because, through no fault of the client, there had been a delay in diagnosing the child. This appeal was successful. With the support of the CIS, the family also applied for and received secondary benefits available in their circumstances.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

## **10. State Pension Contributory**

The client attended the CIS after he was turned down for State Pension Contributory due to lack of contributions. With the support of the CIS, he applied for retrospective partnership on the family farm, which was awarded eight months later. State Pension Contributory was awarded going forward, but no backdated payment was granted.

There was a delay of some 8 months in sending out an inspector to finalise the application for retrospective partnership. Therefore the CIS appealed the decision not to backdate on the grounds of natural justice, as the client was delayed in bringing his PRSI up to date by the very department who refused the back-payment.

The legislation does state quite clearly that a PRSI based payment may not be backdated beyond the date on which the PRSI was paid. The natural justice argument prevailed and appeal was



allowed with backdating to April 2017. The client was very happy and received a back-payment of €9,720. The client very satisfied with outcome.

It took the Social Welfare Appeals Office 14 months to issue a judgement in this case.

*Source: South Munster Citizens Information Service*

## **11. Jobseeker's Benefit**

The client presented with an overpayment on Child Benefit and Jobseeker's Benefit due to children and spouse being out of the country for a period of time due to the death and ill health of family members. The client was unaware that their child benefit payment had stopped for 6 years and only became aware of the overpayment and cessation of their benefit when they provided the department with additional information.

The CIS appealed both overpayments on behalf of the client. The overpayment appeal for Jobseeker's Benefit was successful and €3,689.50 was written off due to absence due to force majeure. The appeal for the write off for the overpayment on child benefit and the backdating of child benefit to point of entitlement was unsuccessful despite appealing to the Chief Appeals Officer under Section 318 and sending a complaint to the Ombudsman. This case took two years and two months to complete and was a complex issue which the client would not have been able to complete themselves.

The client provided feedback to the service, stating "[name of IO] did more than her best helping us over the years. By having best trained agents like [name of IO] who help people above and beyond.... It is the best service in Ireland. It represents (sic) you much better than what you have represented yourself".

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

## **12. Carer's Allowance**

The client became ill and requested her husband be allowed to collect her Carer's Allowance at the post office, which triggered a review of her situation. The client was a carer for her daughter who has a physical disability. On review it was found that her daughter had begun college, therefore an overpayment of €12,000 was declared and her Carer's Allowance was discontinued. The client requested help from the CIS to appeal this decision. In addition, the client was at this time being treated for cancer and was unwell herself.

A basic notice of appeal was filed by the CIS and a Freedom of Information (FOI) request went in. The Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) issued a hearing notice for a date when the advocate was not available, so the Development Manager requested a postponement, which was granted.

The submission to the SWAO included the following;

- Timetable for the college her daughter was attending.
- Excel spreadsheet setting out the basis for reducing the original overpayment from €12,000 to €2,400 by deducting all of the weeks when her daughter was at home (33 out of 59) and then deducting the adult dependent payment the client was entitled to on her husband's disability payment.

The SWAO accepted the CIS reduction of the overpayment from €12,000 to €2,400 as the entitlement to do so is written in legislation. The appeals officer also accepted the appellant believed she was providing full time care and attention as she was still providing in excess of 35 hours per week. The SWAO went further and stated the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) had acted unreasonably in declaring a retrospective overpayment and declared the decision to terminate carers allowance stood from the date of decision on appeal so there were no monies owed. The appeals officer considered it unreasonable that the carers allowance application was reviewed for the first time after 16 years and that it took a further six months before a letter detailing the outcome of the review was issued to the appellant.

Going forward the client will put in a claim for carers allowance at the end of each year for the weeks her daughter is home from college. The client wrote to the service to say; "Thanks a million for all your help, my mother and I really appreciate everything you done for us. Such a weight off our shoulders, thanks again."

*Source: South Munster Citizens Information Service*

### **13. Carer's Allowance**

The client presented at the CIS for support with her Carer's Allowance application. She has a daughter who has been ill since birth and her conditions worsened at over the past two years. The client was in receipt of Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) and in a separate case, the CIS sought back payment, which was granted.

Due to the granting of the DCA back-payment, she was now eligible for Carer's Support Grant. Following an extensive submission by the CIS, Carer's Allowance was granted and backdated,

which amounting to arrears of €15,535 and a weekly payment going forward of €119.50 plus additional payments from Household Benefits and a GP Visit Card.

This bulk sum and the weekly payment has given the family a huge boost as they were taking their daughter for private care that they could not afford to pay for and were considering fundraising. The client also needed to reduce her working hours to give greater care for her daughter so this additional income facilitated that.

The CIS supported the client with submissions as the client was under huge emotional and financial pressure. There were times the client could not make appointments due to her daughter's illness and times she was not in a position to provide all written evidence.

Client was successful in backdating her DCA by 6 months, making her eligible for Carer's Support Grant and later Carer's Allowance that was also backdated to the granting of DCA. The clients wrote to the service saying; "We have finally been recognized within our family for my need to be a fulltime carer for our sick child. [Name of IO] is an amazing lady and we are hugely grateful for her solid advice and advocacy for our family."

*Source: South Munster Citizens Information Service*

#### **14. Disability Allowance**

The client presented to the CIS seeking support and assistance in appealing the refusal of her Disability Allowance (DA) application. The reason given for the refusal was; '*applicant is not substantially restricted in seeking suitable employment, by reason of a specified disability, which is expected to last for a period of a year. Although the medical evidence shows a level of incapacity it does not show substantial restriction in undertaking suitable employment or training*'.

The client presented very distressed and with limited English and it was obvious from the outset that she would require significant support and assistance from CIS in the appeal process. The client had a long and complicated medical history dating back to her teenage years. She advised that her long term medical issues were having a detrimental impact on her mental health which resulted in depression.

The advocate explained and clarified the CIS Advocacy process and policies, ensuring that the client signed all relevant paperwork for an advocacy case to be created. They then drafted an appeal letter, which was issued to Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO), requesting an oral hearing. In addition the clients file was requested from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI).

Due to delays in DA application processing it was now over 1 year since the client submitted her initial application. The Advocate reviewed the file received under FOI and noted that the medical evidence contained within it was limited and more importantly no longer up to date.

The advocate issued a CIS template letter to the clients GP to request an up to date medical report. This demonstrated that the client was in the process of attending further consultant appointments in the coming months.

The CIS advocate also requested that the client complete a diary of a typical day and her attempts to live and cope with the constant pain. The advocate explained the diary process and level of detail required in order to support her appeal. The client's diary was comprehensive and very honest; the final line stated; "*I never wanted to be a woman with a chronic disease; I never wanted to be a wife and mother with a chronic disease.*"

It took some weeks for client to collate all of the required information and the advocate assisted and supported the client on each step of the way. Five months after the initial appeal was lodged to the SWAO an oral hearing was granted to client.

In readiness for the hearing, the advocate prepared a comprehensive submission document, including the relevant and up to date medical evidence from a number of consultants, together with the very honest daily diary complied by client. The advocate met with the client a number of times before the hearing, as she was extremely anxious and nervous about the process and required a lot of support from the CIS. On the day, the advocate attended the hearing and spoke at intervals when the client was too upset or did not understand the line of questioning from the Appeals Officer.

The client was very distressed after the hearing and seemed to think that it had not gone well. The advocate explained that it was a process and that the Appeals Officer had a copy of the submission and a decision could be expected in the coming weeks. Approximately 2 weeks after the oral hearing, the CIS and the client received correspondence from the SWAO to say that appeal was allowed. As a result Disability Allowance was granted to client, which included arrears dating back to the date she had first applied.

Client was extremely thankful to the CIS for support and assistance through this process; she advised that she would not have been able to negotiate the difficult appeal process on her own. On her feedback form she stated that "*she would recommend the CIS Advocacy service because they were able to help and were also so kind*".

*Source: North Leinster Citizens Information Service*

# Case Studies: Employment

## 1. Unfair Dismissal

The client was dismissed from his employment after being absent due to sickness. Prior to being ill, he was working up to 53 hours per week with no proper breaks. After he recovered, no work was made available for him, despite another person being taken on by the company, therefore the client decided to take a constructive dismissal case.

The CIS met with the client and examined all the evidence and prepared a detailed Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) submission for him. At the client's request, the CIS attended the WRC hearing for client (5 hours). The case was successful and the client won €10,260 for unfair dismissal, €500 for no contract of employment and €1,026 for minimum notice. The case lost under payment of wages for overtime/lack of proper breaks.

The employer did not appeal the decision, but the client was not paid within 42 days as ordered.

The client then took case to District Court for enforcement, however the Judge threw out the case without providing a reason. The CIS then supported the client to submit an enforcement order to the WRC. However, the WRC will not pursue enforcement as the client has already done so through District Court. WRC advised client to seek a judicial review or appeal the decision to Circuit Court as they have not received any monies. The CIS then referred the client to the Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) to pursue as the CIS cannot proceed any further.

*Source: Dublin North Citizens Information Service*

## 2. Redundancy

The client came into the CIS when their employer abruptly closed his business and disappeared, leaving client without any employment. The client believed they were entitled to redundancy payment given their years of unbroken service; therefore, the CIS gathered information in relation to their employment history (payslips, P60s etc.) and assisted him to make a request to Revenue for their employment record. We advised the client to send RP77 form to their employer and helped him to complete this form. The CIS then supported the client to make a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), seeking a declaration of redundancy and represented him at the adjudication hearing. On receipt of the WRC declaration of redundancy, we assisted client to complete an online redundancy claim to DEASP.

The client was awarded a partial redundancy payment, due to a gap in their PRSI record in this employment. We advised the client to contact the previous owner of the business to request a confirmation letter stating that they had been continuously employed for the whole period.

The CIS then wrote to the PRSI records section to have client's record updated. Once done, we contacted the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) Redundancy Payments Section and eventually the client was awarded the balance of their redundancy payment.

This case was complicated by a number of factors outside the client's control:

1. The employer had completely vanished, with no forwarding address. The employer's business had changed ownership and name a number of times and the CIS had to research the exact registered name and registered number of the business at the time it closed, which turned out to be in another EU member state.
2. It emerged that the employer had not paid PRSI for a number of years; therefore the client's PRSI record was incomplete. This raised issues in relation to (a) entitlement to a redundancy payment and (b) entitlement to PRSI based DEASP payments. The CIS had to prepare a submission and negotiate with the DEASP to ensure that the client was not seen as complicit in the non-payment of PRSI and to have the client's PRSI record updated in full.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

### **3. Payment of Wages**

The client came to the CIS to enquire if it was legal for their employer to reduce their hourly rate from the agreed amount of €38.00 to €36.12. She had been on maternity leave and the reduction happened on her return to work. The reason the employer gave for the reduction was that they had not allowed for the 8% holiday pay that the employee was due as a part time worker. The CIS wrote to the employer to question the pay reduction, they replied quoting a European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling, which found that it was illegal to include holiday pay into the employee's pay. After a number of emails back and forth, we convinced the employer that they were misinterpreting the findings of the ECJ and that they could not deduct the amount of holiday pay from employee's hourly rate. The client's pay was then restored to the correct amount.

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

### **4. Unfair Dismissal**

The client attended the CIS, having been dismissed with immediate effect & offered payment in lieu of notice. Before coming to the CIS he had tried to contact his former employer to get his outstanding wages as well as his P45 which his new employer required, but he had had no success. English is not the client's first language, so the CIS advocate contacted his employer and



received a reply stating that payment due & P45 would be available for client to collect in the employers office.

When the client arrived to collect, he was presented with letter to sign before he could get his payment and the P45. This letter purported to stop the client speaking to any third party about his former employment. The client did not want to sign the letter so the CIS advocate phoned the employer to try and negotiate. As we seemed to be at stalemate, the advocate submitted a data access request for the clients record and initiated a Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) complaint. However before the complaint could be submitted, the client called to say that he had received all monies due to him, €1,076.92, as well as his P45. He did not have to sign any letter binding him to silence and his current job was no longer at risk as he could give current employer a copy of his P45.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## **5. Redundancy**

Client had worked for a company since 2011. The premises closed down and the employer failed to pay any redundancy, and the accountant representing the Company was uncontactable. CIS took a case on behalf of client and her colleagues to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). Having received a decision in their favour we were then able to access the Social Insurance Fund. Client received payment of €4,436 comprising redundancy and €887 in lieu of notice. Case took 15.49 hours and involved 47 actions.

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

## **6. Unfair Dismissal**

Client was employed by a company for three years until his dismissal. During the six-month period between the beginning of the disciplinary process to the date of dismissal, the client cooperated fully with his employer, however he felt the employer undermined him at every opportunity and that the disciplinary process was not conducted fairly.

The CIS tried, unsuccessfully, to engage with the employer to come to an amicable resolution in relation to the clients employment, however the employer did not engage at all, dismissing the client without the benefit of natural justice and a fair procedure. On behalf of the client, the CIS lodged a complaint with the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).



Our service met with the client on numerous consultations and also represented him by way of written submissions and attendance at the WRC for both an initial hearing and a second hearing over seven months later. The outcome of the complaint was as follows: Unfair dismissal - upheld awarded €15,750, Unpaid commission/Unlawful deduction – upheld, awarded €2,515, Notice period – upheld, awarded €4,615.

This was a complex case, which required many hours from the CIS in relation to correspondence and engagement with the WRC. Following the hearing, no appeal was submitted by employer and no payment received by employee. The CIS then sent a letter to employer to seek payment, which was received, in full, a month later.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## **7. Payment of Wages**

This client was an employee of a State body and had worked as a part time worker for over 20 years. In that time she had never had a contract or was awarded any holidays (including public holidays). Although the client had queried this, she was informed on numerous occasions that she was "not entitled" to paid holidays. On taking instructions, we advised our client of her rights and notified her employer of her complaint. As the employer failed to respond we sought a copy of her personnel file under Freedom Of Information (FOI). On reviewing the file it was clear that the employer was in breach of employment regulations and so we supported the client to make a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). The employer failed to respond to the complaint.

A month later, we became aware of a new decision from the ECJ (King-V- The Sash Window Co.) whereby the European Courts of Justice found that where an employer deliberately prevented a worker from taking up annual leave, there was no limit to the back pay claimed (the OWT Act, limits the right to claim back holidays, up to 12 months). At this point a submission was made to the WRC, a hearing took place, which was then adjourned for further submissions. Because of the King decision, the Adjudicator indicated he was of the opinion he could award back-pay notwithstanding current legislation. However events overtook us when the Supreme Court made a ruling in June 2018, preventing the WRC from applying ECJ rulings directly. Following a further hearing seven months later, the Adjudicator awarded our client compensation of €3,500 for failure to provide Contract, Holiday and Public Holiday claim, however, he was unable to make any further award in respect of the 20 years when the client did not receive any holidays.

*Source: South Connacht Citizens Information Service*



## 8. Redundancy

The client was referred to the CIS by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). She had worked for a company since early 2017 and was on maternity leave when she received a copy of part of her P45 in the post, with no other correspondence. She contacted her manager to find out why she had been sent her P45 and was informed that the business had gone into liquidation.

Her manager contacted her a week later that say that a new company might be doing a TUPE transfer of staff from the old company to the new one; the manager also clarified that everyone had received a P45, but that she is now working for the new company. The manager also explained that there would be a creditors meeting soon where a liquidator would be appointed. A month later, the client had still not heard anything so checked Solo Check to identify the liquidator, whom she contacted. The liquidator stated there was a TUPE of her contract to the new company.

Three months later, our client again contacted her manager stressing that she had heard nothing from the new company regarding her return to work. She was give the details of a Human Resources (HR) employee to contact. The client contacted the HR employee, advising that she had not received any official confirmation regarding her employment or any TUPE process. The HR department of the new company replied, stating, "Unfortunately TUPE did not apply under section 6 – The new company did not buy the old company. The new company did take over selected contracts; however this was after the old company commenced the insolvency process."

Our client forwarded this information to the liquidator who stated they would look into it and get back to our client. After another two emails, they replied, stating that TUPE had taken place and that she was an employee of the new company.

Following this, our client wrote a complaint to the liquidator company outlining her grievances. She received a response from them stating that prior to them becoming the liquidator the staff contracts had already transferred to the new company under a TUPE regulation. They also advised she seek legal advice due to the lack of communication from the new company.

The client then called the WRC and submitted a claim for unfair dismissal as advised. The WRC referred client to North Dublin CIS for further help with her case.

The client's case was looked at by the CIS and several meetings were held with her in order to establish the facts of her case. It was agreed that the CIS would represent the client at the next WRC hearing. CIS prepared the submission and undertook further research into client's case, with

numerous calls and emails made to both the old and new company and the liquidator by CIS with the same conflicting information been received by all.

At the WRC hearing, the Adjudicator was reluctant to proceed with the case as the liquidator was not present, so CIS contacted the liquidator to request permission for the hearing to go ahead without them. This meant that the adjudicator was free to make a decision on the case. CIS represented the client and outlined the case information to the adjudicator.

The adjudicator was satisfied that the client was unfairly dismissed from her employment, as an accidental victim of a financial fall out when the respondent company went into liquidation. The situation was more complicated by reason of the fact that our client was on protective leave and not in a position to vindicate her rights or have her voice heard.

**Decision:** Section 8 of the Unfair Dismissal Acts 1977 – 2015 requires that a decision in relation to the unfair dismissal claim consisting of a grant of redress in accordance with section 7 of the 1977 Act. Compensation of €5,000 was awarded to the client.

The client was very pleased that we took on the case at such short notice; she was delighted with the service and happy with the outcome of her case.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## 9. Unfair Dismissal

The client, an agency worker, had been dismissed following a disciplinary hearing due to a one-off disciplinary incident. When he attended the CIS, he had one day left to lodge an appeal regarding the disciplinary outcome.

Following the initial meeting with the client, a follow up appointment was scheduled for that afternoon, due to the tight time restrictions (one day left to lodge an appeal for his disciplinary hearing). An initial appeal letter was drafted to comply with the time restrictions and the client was supported in requesting a meeting in relation to his disciplinary process. The intention was that the CIS Information Officer would attend the meeting. However, the company cancelled the meeting.

A follow up appeal letter was submitted on behalf on the client, outlining his long service history of employment (6 years), the fact that he never had a disciplinary issue or a negative performance review and that the nature of the disciplinary issue that occurred was a one-off incident. One of the main arguments was that the disciplinary response (dismissal) was



disproportionate to the incident and that the unblemished service history and the circumstances of the incident had not been considered. An appeal meeting was rescheduled. The Information Officer accompanied the client to the appeal hearing.

The client's dismissal also had repercussions for his social welfare situation, as he had been in receipt of Working Family Payment (WFP). The client was advised to contact the WFP section and apply for Jobseeker's Benefit. A support letter to DEASP was drafted by the Information Officer to explain the circumstances of the client.

The outcome from the appeal hearing was positive and the client was returned to work. He was moved back to his original position and location (the client had recently been moved to another location) which was his preferred choice.

This is a fantastic outcome for the client and was resolved in a very short period of time without the need to resort to formal redress mechanisms. A particular challenge with this case was the language support needed as the client's first language was not English.

The client expressed how happy he was with the outcome and was very thankful for the assistance he received. He is delighted to be back at work and he feels the early intervention of the CIC helped in securing his position.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## **10. Payment of Wages**

The client was owed holiday pay and annual leave pay from his previous employer. He had been unwell and was already out of time to lodge a Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) complaint when he came to CIS.

Initially this was just a consultation – outlining options to client, assisting client to write to employer. When it progressed to full blown advocacy the CIS wrote to the employer and assisted the client to file complaint with WRC, explaining the issue in relation to being out of time.

CIS negotiated a settlement with the employer; communicated with WRC and assisted client to reach a satisfactory settlement. Through CIS involvement, Client received €7,000 as a settlement – it would be hard to say if he would have got this if he had gone to WRC.

Through CIS involvement, the employer was able to settle locally without going to WRC. The client feedback was positive. He felt that he could not have achieved the outcome without our support.

*Source: South Munster Citizens Information Service*

## **11. Dignity at Work**

The client came into the CIS as he was experiencing treatment from other staff which undermined his dignity at work. Initially establishing the facts of his situation was very difficult as the client had poor English and was assisted by friends whose English is only a little better.

The client had made a number of informal complaints to his supervisor, regarding his treatment by other staff who were generally abusive and bullying. In the last incident prior to attending the CIS, he complained to management and was directed to go home; the duty manager said she would contact him. There was no further contact from the company and he was not rostered for further work. As his manager did not respond, the client sent an email requesting his contract directly to the Human Resources department, which was also ignored.

When he contacted the CIS, he was initially assisted with a letter to the company outlining his complaint and requesting his terms and conditions of employment and the anti-bullying policy in order to pursue his complaint further. The client discovered that his P45 had been sent to Revenue by the employer, unbeknownst to him, via Revenue Online Service. Email correspondence ensued and although the employer asserted that he was still an employee and the P45 was in error, repeated requests via email and subsequent letter for his terms and conditions of employment and anti-bullying policy were ignored and the employer did not place him on the roster again following his complaint.

The CIS assisted the client to calculate his outstanding holiday pay, which he requested but did not receive. Eventually he decided to complain to Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) with the assistance of the service. The complaint included the following: Pay (Annual Leave and Public Holidays), Minimum Notice, Terms of Employment (Information), Penalisation under Safety Health and Welfare at Work legislation. After the client lodged his complaint, the employer changed the registered office with the Companies Registration Office. The CIS continued to correspond with the WRC regarding these developments on the client's behalf.

When the WRC hearing was scheduled the client received a bank transfer from the employer paying him his outstanding holiday pay owed of over €500. Just before the hearing the company offered to talk with client with a view to settling the case. The client attended and negotiated with the employer to withdraw all remaining issues in return for compensation of €5,000. They then formally instructed the service to withdraw his complaints with WRC and this was done.

*Source: South Connacht Citizens Information Service*

# Case Studies:

## Housing

### 1. Access to Accommodation

The client came into the CIS to discuss their family situation and the issues they have with housing. They had submitted an application for social housing in November 2018 and six months later their application was rejected from social housing list.

With the permission of the client, the CIS requested the file under Freedom of Information (FOI) and discovered that the client household had been wrongly assessed. We contacted the appeals officer in the housing section and requested a correct assessment be undertaken and a revised decision issued immediately. It took another 3 months for the housing section to provide a revised decision, accept the client on the social housing accommodation list and give a "go" to apply for Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

The client wrote to the service; "Thanks to the staff, I finally received what I was looking for".

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

### 2. Access to Accommodation

The client had multiple disabilities, both intellectual and physical and uses a walking aide to get around. She lived in a housing association apartment on the top floor of a complex, away from her family. She had been receiving abuse from some of her neighbours and local children were taunting her. Another Information Officer in the CIS had dealt with her previously in relation to rent arrears and anti-social behaviour. The rent issue had been sorted but the housing body could not give any commitments regarding resolving the abuse. When the client presented at the CIS, she was very confused and unsure of her own position on the housing list/transfer list. The CIS advocate clarified the status with the local authority and established that the client was on the transfer list and obtained her position. The CIS then assisted the client with an Exceptional Social Grounds priority application, which was subsequently refused. In researching the housing list priority process, we discovered that it is not possible to obtain two priorities on the housing list/transfer list. In this situation the CIS was not aware that client had already obtained a medical priority. At this point a Freedom of Information (FOI) request was sent, in order to discern all of the facts that client was not able to provide.

The client found it difficult to stay in tune with advocacy process, on a number of occasions she did not attend arranged appointments. She was unaware of her own position and was often confused as to our role. After seeking advice from the Advocacy Support Worker, a referral was submitted to the Mercy Law Centre, but the client did not respond. Contact was then lost with client, who was not responding to letters and had stopped calling into the centre. At this point,

her case was closed and the case closure letter and feedback form were sent out. She then contacted the CIS again to say she had received the letter and was confused about its contents. The advocate informed her of the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS) and asked her how she would feel if a NAS advocate called out to her home to speak with her about her situation, which she agreed to; a NAS referral was then made.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

### **3. Discrimination**

The client approached the CIS as he believed he had been discriminated against on the housing assistance ground by a landlord whose property he wished to rent. He wished to arrange a viewing of property, but in an email response the landlord stated client could view the property, but landlord would not accept Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). The client, with assistance of the CIS, brought a complaint under Section 6 (1) of the Equal Status Act 2000, which prevents discrimination in the provision of accommodation. A hearing was held in Workplace Relations Commission and the client's complaint was upheld; the landlord was ordered to pay €2,000 in compensation. As the landlord was residing out of the jurisdiction, considerable efforts were made to contact them and a payment plan was put in place whereby landlord would pay €200 a month until compensation was fully paid.

The client rang the centre to express gratitude to the advocate about how case was conducted.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

### **4. Access to Accommodation**

The client came into the CIS to request help in getting both short term accommodation and eventually getting a local authority property. They were currently on One Parent Family Payment and had three small children. The client was in rented accommodation and had been given notice to leave as the landlord was planning on selling the property. She was living in a rural area with little access to transport, two of the children were attending a rural school and the third was in a local crèche. All children were very settled and she did not wish to move them, however, she was not able to find appropriate accommodation in the area. The situation was making her very anxious and she had been on the local authority housing list for 10 years.

The CIS agreed to contact the local authority and make an appointment with the housing department in order to request that she is allocated a local authority property, as she was going



to be homeless. The client requested the CIS to accompany her to the meeting. In the meantime the CIS supported her to seek alternative accommodation through the rental market. Over the course of two years the CIS supported her to attend a number of meetings with both the homeless officer and the housing department regarding her situation. In the interim, she was given temporary housing arrangements in both Bed and Breakfast and various hotels, which caused anxiety and hardship for both herself and children. She has now been given a six-month tenancy with some stability and is prioritised for the next available house.

*Source: North Munster Citizens Information Service*

## **5. Eviction**

The client attended the CIS having received notice of the termination of his tenancy due to the landlord selling the property. No statutory declaration was made. The CIS advocate phoned the Housing Assistance Payment team (HAP) to advise them of notice. They advised that client should register with council homeless section to seek approval for homeless HAP, if she was not able to find alternative accommodation. The CIS assisted client to apply for accommodation and in the meantime they moved into homeless accommodation. The client came back into the CIS, stating they had reason to believe that landlord had not put house up for sale. There was a sign outside the property that said "sale agreed" so the CIS advocate phoned the estate agent to enquire. The estate agent stated property had never been on their books.

The client was then supported to make a complaint to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB), as the eviction was a breach of the landlord's obligations. The case was successful and the RTB awarded the client €2,500 compensation. The landlord did not appeal and also did not make the payment to the client, therefore the CIS applied to RTB for assistance with enforcement. Several unsuccessful attempts were made by phone to the RTB, to ascertain whether they had accepted the clients request for enforcement. Later client confirmed that she had been referred to a solicitor for the enforcement of the determination order.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

## **6. Discrimination**

The client presented at the CIS having been homeless for nearly two years. He had recently responded to an advert for a flat on a rental website and advised them that he was eligible for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). He received a response saying they were not in a position to accept HAP at that time. He came to CIS for advice and, after being advised of the

option to make a complaint under the Equal Status Act, he sent an ES1 form and subsequently a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). As the client had written the Citizen Information Centre's name on the WRC form, the WRC replied to the centre, outlining some details that were missing. The CIS advocate then arranged to meet with the client and assisted them to write back to WRC with the details requested.

The advocate noticed that it was unclear who the actual owner of the property was and assisted the client to write to WRC to set out that there were two potential respondents. The advocate prepared client for the hearing but did not attend on the day, as the respondents had legal representation. The client was awarded €2,000 compensation by WRC. The respondent then appealed the decision to the Circuit Court so the CIS then referred case to Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC) who agreed to take the case. The Circuit Court upheld the WRC decision but halved the amount of compensation.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

## **7. Housing Assistance Payment**

The client had rented a property and was on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, when the property was taken into receivership. The tenancy continued and the receiver's agent engaged with the local authority in regard to HAP. The client was then offered a local authority property and gave notice accordingly. At the end of the tenancy, an inspection was carried out by receiver's agent and the client was informed that there was no reason why she should not get her deposit back. She understood this to mean that receiver would return the deposit, however, when she contacted the receiver, they informed her that they were not responsible for the return of the deposit as it had not been forwarded to them by landlord.

When she contacted the landlord he stated the receiver was responsible as he had no funds or deposits held as the receiver had swept all his accounts. The CIS then referred a complaint against landlord to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) who subsequently ruled in the client's favour and held that landlord should return the deposit. The landlord appealed this decision to the RTB Tribunal. At the RTB hearing, the CIS represented the client and, on suggestion of the Tribunal, we entered into negotiations with the landlord on the clients behalf. Consequently an agreed sum of €750 was to be paid the following day to client's account (the original deposit was €950). Client agreed she was happy to accept the amount, as it was very possible she would never get full deposit back and the money was lodged in the clients account within 3 days.

*Source: North Leinster Citizens Information Service*

## **8. Access to Accommodation**

The client, a women who was parenting alone with 4 children, called to the CIS as she had been turned down for social housing in the past due to her income but her circumstances had recently changed. She had received a cancer diagnosis and needed support in resubmitting her housing application as her rent was due to increase after the summer. She was receiving Illness Benefit and needed support in reapplying for Working Family Payment, thereby allowing her apply for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance.

On a subsequent visit, it became obvious that she is not receiving the correct payment as she is only receiving payment for two out of her four children. As a result of the CIS support, her Illness Benefit was corrected to include all 4 children and her payment increased from €229.80 to €261.60, with additional back pay of €635. Her social housing application successfully submitted and a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) payment was received of €84 per week.

On her return to work, Working Family Payment was successfully applied for, amounting to €154 per week.

*Source: South Munster Citizens Information Service*

## **9. Housing Assistance Payment**

The client had been living in private rented accommodation since January 2015. He was approved for Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) in Dec 2017 but HAP was later refused by his landlord. The local authority advised the client to lodge a complaint to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) due to the landlord's breach of obligation under Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016. The client did so and the case was heard, but the complaint not upheld.

Two months after the hearing, the client received a tenancy termination notice from the landlord, and he subsequently presented at the CIS. The client was supported to submit a Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) complaint (Equal Status Acts 2000-2015) and the CIS represented them at the hearing. The WRC decision was to uphold the complaint and the client was awarded €12,000 in compensation.

What was CIS involvement?

- Provided clarity to client on why their original RTB complaint was not upheld, and what avenue this complaint should have been directed to. Explanation of the remit of the RTB & the WRC and the appropriate laws under which the complaints were taken.
- Assistance to complete the WRC online complaints form.

- Advice on what documentation would be required to support his claim.
- Constant support & reassurance in explaining the processes as English was not the clients first language.
- Compilation of submission for WRC hearing.
- Client preparation for WRC hearing.
- Management of clients expectations throughout process.
- Representation at WRC hearing.
- Explanation of possible appeal to Labour Court and timeframe for same.
- Communicating with the respondents daughter regarding the transfer of monies, as requested.
- Keeping client updated throughout process.

What was the outcome? (What was the impact of CIS involvement)

- The client was defeated & somewhat angry on presentation to our service following a year-long battle which ended in his RTB complaint not being upheld.
- Client was initially seeking information as to why the process he has been advised to follow, the RTB, had failed. This explanation was delivered in great detail and took a considerable time.
- This was followed by advice as to where he could still seek redress through the appropriate channels, the WRC.
- Client was offered our advocacy service, which was explained to him in detail, outlining the remit of our service, the policies and procedures involved.
- Client happily engaged with this process, and signed the Advocacy Service Agreement
- Client admitted he regretted not presenting to the CIS some 13 months earlier.
- Client was informed exactly what documentation he needed to compile for WRC purposes, and he brought this information to the CIS in the weeks following.
- Client's sense of confidence grew as the weeks passed as he stated he felt he was now engaged with a service who knew what they were doing, and who would support him through the process.
- During a conversation about possible outcomes and expectation the client stated that he actually didn't mind too much now what the outcome was, because he knew the I.O had done her utmost to assist him and advocate on his behalf throughout. He said he felt that no more could be done, whatever the outcome, and that he was truly grateful for all of our efforts.

- At WRC hearing, representation was imperative for our client, as this process proved difficult with the respondent in attendance. The hearing lasted for over two hours, with much toing & froing between sides.
- Our client required reassurance throughout and much advice as to when not to argue back or interrupt. Without representation the clients admitted he would probably have become quite irate at times, and that he welcomed the gentle instructions given to him.
- CIS involvement meant that the WRC adjudicator received a factual submission, presented in an easy to use book format.
- Following the WRC decision, the onus was taken off the client to follow-up with the Labour Court. After 42 days it was checked and relayed to client that appeal had not been lodged.
- Communication between the respondent's daughter and I.O commenced and client's method of preferred payment was relayed to respondents.
- Respondents asked for confirmation from I.O to confirm that the €12,000 was lodged successfully into clients account.

Considerable positive feedback has been received from client, and an acknowledgement that he could not have navigated this process without our involvement.

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

"We appealed a decision about Disability Allowance and without the help of the CIS we wouldn't have had a positive outcome. **All the staff are very helpful** and know the job well."

**South Leinster client**

# Case Studies:

## Education

### 1. Student Grant

The client was a mature student, returning to education after about thirty years. She started a full-time degree course in September 2018. She applied to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) for the student grant. As she was in receipt of Back to Education Allowance she knew she would not be eligible for the maintenance part of the grant, however, she could still be eligible for help with the student contribution of €3,000. She knew that she would satisfy the income conditions for the grant, together with the other conditions such as nationality, residency and progression in education. She was not in a position to pay the student contribution herself, so it was essential that she was awarded the grant. She had been living with her sister for many years, in her sister's own house. Her mother was deceased and her elderly father lived on his own. As she was a mature student and not living with her parent(s), this meant that she should be assessed as an independent candidate for the student grant and on her own income only.

She was shocked to receive a decision from SUSI that she was not entitled to the student grant, as she had not demonstrated to their satisfaction that she was an independent candidate in the year before (which was the assessment period). She said that she had sent them evidence of social welfare payments, bank statements and Medical Card. She was very distressed, as without the student grant to pay the student contribution she said she would have to leave her degree course.

The CIS spoke with SUSI on her behalf and examined the list of documents that they said were acceptable to prove independent residence, as well as the student grant legislation. The legislation did not specify exactly what documents were needed to prove an applicant was an independent student, but stated that it must be '... established to the satisfaction of the awarding authority that they are eligible on that basis'. The documents that SUSI deemed acceptable were documents connected to the address of the property itself, e.g. utility bill, mortgage, Local Property Tax, Rent Supplement or Housing Assistance Payment, Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) registration. Documents showing proof of address, such as bank statements, social welfare letters (other than Rent Supplement), private rented tenancy agreements, mobile phone bills and GP or hospital letters were not acceptable as proof of independence residence from parent(s).

The client did not have any appropriate utility bills in her name. The electricity, gas and fixed-line broadband bills were all in her sister's name as it was her house. The client did subsequently add her name to the electricity bill, but unfortunately we had to advise her that this would not be retrospective so would not help with her SUSI issue. None of the other acceptable documentation was relevant for the client (mortgage, Rent Supplement, LPT etc), so she was in a very difficult situation.



She was previously in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance before receiving Back to Education Allowance, so we asked her if she had ever been visited by a Social Welfare Inspector at home to assess her claim. She said that she had, the year before, so we wrote a letter to the Inspector explaining the situation and asking if they could write a letter confirming that they had visited her at home and were aware of her personal situation that she was not living with a parent. A signed authority to act was included with our letter. Thankfully, and somewhat to our surprise, the Social Welfare Inspector was willing to do this and gave the client a letter to this effect.

We also asked the client if she was in a position to contact her father and ask him to provide utility bills in his name for his own address. He was willing to do this and sent her some electricity bills for the previous year.

We completed the SUSI appeal form outlining the basis of the client's appeal and attached the supporting documents, namely letter from the Social Welfare Inspector and her father's electricity bills.

About six weeks later the client contacted the CIS to say that her SUSI appeal was successful and her student contribution of €3,000 had been paid in full. She was very relieved and thanked us for our assistance. She said that she could not have done it by herself and that she had found the SUSI rules very confusing.

This case highlighted a social policy issue, in that it can be very difficult for independent mature students to prove to SUSI's satisfaction that they are residing independently from their parents. The burden of proof seems very high and there are many documents that are not acceptable. Many people are living with family or friends and in different private rented situations and would not always be in a position to have utility bills in their own name. In addition, applicants may not be in contact with their parents or in a position to ask them for personal documentation confirming their residence at a different address. We have seen an increase in this issue for independent mature students in the context of the housing crisis.

*Source: Dublin North Citizens Information Service*

## **2. Student Grant**

Our client, who is studying an undergraduate course in England, applied for a Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant. Six months later, SUSI refused her application on grounds that she had not supplied the documents requested within the specified timeframe. This specifically referred to requests for our client to provide details of foreign income for the years 2016 and 2017 – if she had been employed in England during those years.

The CIS initially submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request for our client's file and on reviewing it, discovered that SUSI had written to her on five separate occasions between July and October 2018, requesting details of her income. It also showed that our client had sent a signed declaration and a P60 issued by the British tax office confirming her 2017 earnings.

However, despite receiving these documents, SUSI wrote to our client again requesting the same details without any explanation as to why the submitted document was considered insufficient. Our client resubmitted this document in early September. However, the following week SUSI again wrote to our client seeking the same details. She resubmitted the P60 a second time in late September. However, SUSI again wrote to her mid-October requesting details of foreign income. Our client again resubmitted the P60 along with a written statement confirming she had not been employed in 2016.

The CIS detailed all of this in our appeal submission and argued that it was not clear on what grounds SUSI did not consider the submitted P60 as evidence of foreign income. We further argued that at no stage had SUSI explained to our client what was insufficient. We submitted that in the interests of natural justice she should have been informed the grounds for considering the submitted documents as being insufficient.

In the notes on her file it was stated that "applicant has not provided UK P60 for 2017, payslips provided are outside the holiday period. Docs have been requested twice, refusing now for insufficient docs." We submitted that the British tax year runs from April to April and that the P60 for the preceding tax year was issued in May. It was argued that the document our client submitted was dated May 2018 and related to her income for the period April 2017 to April 2018.



We submitted that the basis for the refusal of her grant was invalid in that our client responded each time to SUSI's request to submit evidence of her income. She was not to know, as she was not informed, why this document was not considered sufficient proof of her foreign income. In addition, the notes on her file stated that she did not submit her P60 for 2017, however the P60 submitted was for earnings in 2017 and the client had no other foreign income and was not working in 2016.

We argued that having submitted all of the required documents, our client's application should have been assessed on the basis of her stated income and not refused for failure to submit requested documents. SUSI accepted the appeal and our client's SUSI grant was awarded.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

### **3. Student Grant**

The client received the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) non-adjacent maintenance grant of €3,025 but as his parent's income is from a social welfare benefit, he is eligible for a special rate grant.

The CIS assisted the client with an appeal to SUSI with supporting documentation. The client received a decision on appeal and Special Rate Grant was granted. Special Rate grant is €5,915 as opposed to the original grant of €3,025, which is a financial gain of €2,890 in the clients favour.

*Source: North Leinster Citizens Information Service*

# Case Studies:

## Consumer

### 1. Broadband

The client called to our office in during 2018, seeking assistance in negotiating the cancellation of an outstanding broadband bill that it was claimed he owed. He was clearly vulnerable and was very stressed by his experience in trying to deal with this matter. The bill for €600 had been passed on to a finance company to recover. The CIS helped the client in making representation both to the utility company and the finance company, requesting that the €138 charge for a modem that he had already returned should be withdrawn. The company agreed to this, reducing the bill to €462, on further negotiation they then agreed to withdraw charges of €216, leaving an outstanding amount owed of €246.

The CIS submitted a data access request on the clients behalf, which indicated that he had contacted the company soon after opening his account, informing them he was having issues with the broadband connection. A couple of weeks later he had called to the company's store and informed them that the broadband was not working and requested that the account be cancelled. He was informed that he would have to contact the company by telephone. The file also showed that several months later he had written to the company with a letter from the principal social worker at a hospital outlining his medical background, the stress he was under and his vulnerability.

The CIS wrote to the finance company including all of the relevant file notes and medical reports, seeking the cancellation of the remaining balance of €246. This was based on the evidence contained within the file, which demonstrated his attempts to cancel the account and his vulnerability. The company responded, stating they did not wish to add to our client's distress and would no longer be pursuing the debt.

In early 2019, the client called back into the CIS with another letter from the same utility company, stating there was an outstanding balance of €72 on his account and that it was therefore unable to erase his data. The CIS wrote to the company stating that he refuted the contention that there was an outstanding balance on his account. The CIS explained the background and expressed surprise that he had received another letter from the company as the understanding was that the matter had been closed. Over a month later, a response was received which did not address any of the points raised.

The CIS replied again to the company, indicating that they had failed to address the points raised, nor did they indicate the basis of the alleged debt. A month later, and over 18 months since the original issue was raised, the CIS received a letter stating that the company maintained no debt in relation to the client's account and that the outstanding balance had been removed.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

## **2. Telecoms**

The client attended the CIS with a concern about a debt with a telecoms provider. After she changed telephone provider, she received a disconnection letter with final bill of €122.60, she then paid €125 at express lodgement in the bank. Several weeks later, she received a bill for €164.20 which she did not think she owed.

The CIS made contact with the telephone company directly and it was established that the client had missed payments in October and November 2017 as her direct debit had been returned unpaid. As a result, the bill that was received was the cost to clear the debt and not a final bill as thought by the client. In addition, the company continued to bill the client even though she had switched provider months earlier, during 2018 – effectively since then the client was being serviced by two providers and being charged by both.

The issue was resolved when the new provider admitted to the error of not connecting them in 2018 and provided a credit to their account to pay off the outstanding bill with previous provider.

Several weeks later the file was re-opened following an email from the telecom provider, who was waiting for the client to set up a payment plan. The CIS explained that client had not returned to service since the issue was resolved and case file was closed.

*Source: North Connacht and Ulster Citizens Information Service*

## **3. Insurance**

The client was due to travel to the USA with her friend and had taken out travel insurance via her local Credit Union. Prior to traveling, her friend became very ill and cancelled her flight. This resulted in our client having to cancel her flight, as the stress of traveling on her own created fear and anxiety and thus she decided not to travel. Our client then sought to recover her costs via her insurance policy. The insurance company refused to pay out stating that mental health issues were not covered under the agreement.

The CIS engaged with the insurance company to remedy the situation and try to resolve the matter but the insurance company refused to reimburse the client. Following discussion with the client, the CIS referred the matter to the Financial Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman referred the matter to a mediator who liaised with both parties. In response to a suggestion from the mediator, the CIS reviewed all the policy documents and sought the return of monies under the cancellation policy as opposed to the insurance policy. The matter was successfully mediated between the parties and the client was offered €1,105 euro in refund for her costs.

*Source: South Leinster Citizens Information Service*

#### **4. Insurance**

The client purchased a Mac Book laptop from a well known retailer, at the cost of over €1,000. At the same time she purchased an insurance policy for an additional €279. The policy covered her for, inter alia, theft of the computer. Later that year, while traveling by airplane, the client was instructed to put the laptop in the overhead compartment. She was expressly forbidden to keep the computer with her, as she was occupying an emergency exit aisle. She complied with this instruction. However, upon touchdown she realised that the computer had been stolen from the overhead compartment during the flight. She reported the theft but the computer was never recovered.

She made a claim for a replacement computer within the required time period as set out in her insurance documents. She was contacted by a claims assessor who asked her basic questions about the circumstances of the theft. Over a month later she received a letter stating that the "agreement does not cover the theft of a product that is stolen while out of sight or control", and that she was deemed to have "not done all she reasonably could to prevent the product from being stolen".

She was unhappy with this decision and contacted the company, but could not convince them that their decision was unfair.

At this point she requested the services of the CIS. The Information Officer (IO) contacted the insurers only to be informed that the email address stated on the letters she had been given only covered UK based enquiries. Another email was sent, but no response was given. After a number of months of being passed from one department to another, the IO then decided that a complaint to the underwriter of the insurance policy was appropriate. This company was based in Gibraltar, but registered to offer insurance services in ROI. A letter outlining the history of the case etc.. was issued to them. An acknowledgement was subsequently received but as no further reply appeared, so at the clients request, a complaint was made to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO).

The FSPO stated that we should give the underwriter more time to respond to our complaint. We gave them a further eight weeks to respond, but having still not received a final response letter, IO advised the FSPO of this issue again. The FSPO then wrote directly to the underwriter asking for a final response letter.

Finally, several months later and almost a year since the laptop was stolen, a letter was issued by the underwriter stating that they would honour the terms of the agreement and offering a voucher for the full cost of the missing computer.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

## 5. Telecoms

The client attended the CIS after his wife had passed away. She had always managed the household bills and affairs; he was greatly confused as he began to receive multiple bills from a telecoms company in the months following her death. He paid the bills as they arrived and attempted to cancel the accounts himself. Unfortunately, due to the multiple accounts he became more stressed and confused during his phone calls with the company. Each bill that arrived brought back his grief and distress at losing his wife. He came to the CIS with the bundle of bills seeking help, wanting to finalise all accounts and only retain a basic landline.

It took multiple phone calls and emails to the telecoms company in order to establish what bills were outstanding and what had been paid, as he had not been understood by the staff of the company when he attempted to cancel the various accounts. He had already paid some accounts that were in his wife's name covering periods after her death, so this money was credited back to him and eventually all the accounts resolved and balanced. He now has a basic landline account. He was extremely grateful for the help as he was unable to navigate the system by himself.

*Source: North Leinster Citizens Information Service*

"I have encouraged lots of friends to ask citizens information about lots of issues.  
**I think it is wonderful to have this one / single service that works on our behalf - the citizen who does not necessarily know how government services etc. work. Thank you."**

**South Munster client**

# Case Studies:

## Health

### 1. Medical Card

The client requested assistance from the CIS as he was supporting his brother who was unable to represent himself due to illness and addiction issues. The clients brother's illness benefit payments had been suspended and Supplementary Welfare payments had been refused by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP). The clients brother no longer had a valid medical card and was unable to acquire medical certificates due to his inability to engage with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the DEASP. His brother was having difficulty dealing with the agencies required to resolve his issues.

The CIS contacted the HSE by phone and asked to have the medical card reinstated explaining the financial hardship ensuing, however, the HSE had closed the applicants file due to lack of engagement. The advocate advised the client to reapply for his brothers medical card and be appointed as an advocate on the application for his brother. The CIS advocate then contacted the Revenue to request a copy of a P45 for the clients brother as requested in the list of required documents by the HSE. The advocate requested that the Revenue issue all documents to the client as the named advocate for his brothers correspondence.

A new application was submitted to the HSE by the CIS and the advocate contacted the HSE to request that the application be prioritised. The CIS advocate also contacted the local DEASP by email and requested payments be made in lieu of illness benefit due to the exceptional circumstances and financial hardship caused. The DEASP officer reinstated payments pending the award of the medical card. A medical card was issued to the clients brother within 15 working days and illness benefit payments resumed. The client expressed his satisfaction with the service in his feedback form. All issues were resolved to the clients satisfaction.

*Source: Dublin South Citizens Information Service*

### 2. Medical Card

The client visited the CIS for help with his application for a medical card; he was a self-employed taxi driver who had suffered a stroke. His only source of income was his earnings from his taxi service. With the support of the CIS, he applied for Invalidity Pension and while waiting for his claim, was granted Supplementary Welfare Allowance. He also applied for a medical card.

The medical card section wrote to him requesting additional documentation including his Notice of Assessment from the Revenue Commissioners or his Income Tax Return (Form 11), however, the client did not submit his Form 11 for the year 2018 as he could not afford to pay



his Accountants fee. The CIS rang the medical card section to see if this requirement could be disregarded, they said they would investigate and let the client know the outcome.

The medical card section contacted the client saying that they still required the documents from Revenue. On receiving this, the client returned to the centre where the CIS advocate wrote a letter requesting that the means test conducted by the Community Welfare officer for the Supplementary Welfare Allowance be considered sufficient evidence of means on this occasion. The letter was submitted with other outstanding documents.

In the last week of November the client received his medical card which was valid for a year.

*Source: North Leinster Citizens Information Service*

### **3. Medical Card**

The client presented at our office as they had been waiting 6 months for a medical card and were unclear why. The client had been in living in Ireland over 10 years, was on Disability Allowance and got a small pension from another EU country. The medical card section had been requesting an E121 form as he is in receipt of the small pension but the EU country would not issue one without a letter from the Irish Government stating that client is residing in Ireland. As they do not issue such letters in Ireland, he is unable to provide the E121. The client is not applying under EU Regulations anyway and did not request this. The CIS advocate wrote a letter to the medical card section requesting an update and list of outstanding documentation needed.

Two months later, the client returned and we rang the medical card section as there had been no response. They informed the client that as they had heard nothing they have closed the case. They had put onto their system that they received the letter from our office but had not responded. The CIS advocate requested that they respond to the letter and was informed that it would need to be emailed in order for them to reply. They said that we could try to email, but the application is closed. The CIS then sent an email explaining the situation again.

There was some emailing between the CIS and the medical card section until eventually, two months later, another email was received stating they cannot process the application without an E121. The CIS advocate emailed back explaining again that the E121 cannot be provided and requested that the application not be processed under EU Regulations. There was also an issue with getting proof of rent paid as the client pays his share to his brother and the brother pays

the rent to the landlord. The landlord would not provide anything to state the rent is paid. The client is slightly over the means test due to this but considering the cost of treatment required this should not have been a problem.

The medical card section emailed back to state that the EU Regulations was taken off the application and they would process the application for a discretionary card. Over two months later, there was still no response so the CIS advocate emailed again for an update. A response came back that they had closed the application, as they had not received the requested E121. The CIS then made a complaint to the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS), explaining everything that had happened and the email thread showing how many times the application had been closed due to the E121 despite them stating it had been taken off the application and despite the client never requesting a medical card under EU Regulations. Although the medical card section never responded to the last complaint, the client did receive their medical card.

*Source: North Dublin Citizens Information Service*

"We were both so stressed that we could have never got this payment without help. We did not even know that we were entitled to it, we only heard about it at a talk given by the Service. We have a lot of expenses and this money **has made a huge difference to us** as the means testing meant I was only getting a small Disability Allowance payment. We are very thankful and grateful and would use the service again and recommend it to others."

**South Munster client**

## Appendix: 2019 CIS Advocacy

## Short-term Advocacy (STA)

Region	Service Area	WTE IO Paid Staff	# STA Actioned	% change	Total Hours (hh:mm)	Avg Time per STA (hh:mm)
Dublin South	Dublin 8 & Bluebell	2.50	189	-12%	80:35	01:14
	Clondalkin & Lucan	3.50	379	-25%	325:55	01:12
	Dublin 12 & 6W	2.50	174	-31%	116:03	01:03
	Dublin 2, 4, 6	2.00	276	12%	166:37	00:55
	Ballyfermot	2.00	150	13%	135:12	01:27
	Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	2.50	100	0%	105:10	02:00
	Tallaght	3.50	178	68%	100:04	00:46
North Dublin	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18.50</b>	<b>1,446</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>1,029:36</b>	<b>01:13</b>
	Fingal (North County)	3.00	258	9%	272:13	01:46
	Dublin City Centre	7.77	552	-2%	465:23	01:10
	Northside	2.50	88	-5%	29:40	00:57
	Dublin North West	3.50	141	-58%	96:25	01:12
	Blanchardstown / Dublin 15	2.00	203	-30%	184:13	01:13
	Dublin City North Bay	0.50	13	8%	6:40	00:42
South Munster	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19.27</b>	<b>1,255</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>1,054:34</b>	<b>01:10</b>
	West Cork	2.50	236	16%	233:12	01:32
	North & East Cork County	3.00	134	-44%	138:31	01:38
	Cork City South	3.07	303	46%	248:03	00:59
	Cork City North	2.00	94	4%	39:48	00:56
	Kerry	4.00	302	-30%	216:16	00:49
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14.57</b>	<b>1,069</b>	<b>-9%</b>	<b>875:50</b>	<b>01:10</b>
North Leinster	Longford	2.00	262	-25%	170:26	00:56
	Westmeath	2.50	209	-40%	133:29	00:50
	Louth	3.00	157	-37%	144:40	01:32
	South Kildare	2.50	117	60%	87:27	01:03
	Meath	3.00	183	-21%	126:06	00:53
	North Kildare	2.00	131	9%	63:12	00:37
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.00</b>	<b>1,059</b>	<b>-23%</b>	<b>725:20</b>	<b>00:58</b>
South Leinster	Offaly	2.50	607	35%	483:26	00:56
	Wicklow	2.50	206	-3%	115:23	00:41
	Wexford	3.00	104	58%	57:00	01:02
	Laois	2.50	222	56%	126:18	00:40
	Carlow	1.50	67	-22%	70:10	01:36
	Kilkenny	1.50	66	843%	66:28	01:13
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13.50</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>918:45</b>	<b>01:01</b>
North Munster	Tipperary	5.00	249	20%	190:22	01:01
	Clare	2.50	54	-25%	34:58	01:05
	Limerick	3.50	495	16%	268:03	00:35
	Waterford	2.50	64	-2%	35:04	00:52
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13.50</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>528:27</b>	<b>00:53</b>
North Connacht & Ulster	Donegal	10.50	166	-28%	64:36	00:48
	Monaghan	2.50	87	-8%	46:17	01:06
	Cavan	1.50	248	-5%	108:25	00:31
	Leitrim	1.50	114	-15%	104:38	01:02
	Sligo	2.00	111	37%	54:58	00:31
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18.00</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>-9%</b>	<b>378:54</b>	<b>00:47</b>
	Roscommon	2.00	58	-50%	32:10	01:15
South Connacht	Galway	4.34	89	-5%	105:42	01:29
	Mayo	3.50	114	-41%	83:24	00:50
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9.84</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>-35%</b>	<b>221:16</b>	<b>01:11</b>
	<b>NATIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>122.18</b>	<b>7,950</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>5,732:42</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>NATIONAL AVERAGE</b>		<b>2.91</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>136:29</b>	<b>1:03</b>

\*These figures were drawn from the advocacy case management system on 01/01/2020.

Long-term Advocacy (LTA) cases					Overall Time		
# Cases open at any point in 2019	% change	Total Hours (hh:mm)	Avg Time per Case (hh:mm)	Active Cases per IO	Overall Time on Advocacy (hh:mm)	% change	
178	-5%	691:34	03:50	71	772:09	-2%	
151	-3%	648:26	04:04	43	974:21	-29%	
115	-12%	399:44	03:19	46	515:47	-16%	
90	96%	421:35	04:26	45	588:12	49%	
65	-23%	399:00	04:38	33	534:12	26%	
61	-9%	415:55	06:36	24	521:05	63%	
40	150%	216:07	05:24	11	316:11	155%	
700	2%	3,192:21	04:36	38	4,221:57	5%	
138	53%	909:09	06:06	46	1,181:22	54%	
111	44%	512:26	04:34	14	977:49	25%	
106	39%	453:22	03:21	42	483:02	6%	
68	-20%	548:34	07:50	19	644:59	-39%	
61	27%	370:26	06:04	31	554:39	32%	
15	-44%	20:30	00:45	30	27:10	8%	
499	24%	2,814:27	04:46	26	3,869:01	10%	
88	31%	567:21	06:18	35	800:33	19%	
72	-6%	406:28	04:53	24	544:59	-30%	
60	-42%	429:27	05:57	20	677:30	-41%	
57	46%	290:05	04:40	29	329:53	91%	
52	-45%	445:57	07:33	13	662:13	-39%	
329	-14%	2,139:18	05:52	23	3,015:08	-21%	
82	4%	288:32	02:46	41	458:58	-8%	
67	-12%	446:31	06:12	27	580:00	2%	
53	39%	390:26	07:13	18	535:06	4%	
44	100%	256:09	05:20	18	343:36	42%	
41	-33%	267:53	05:49	14	393:59	-37%	
39	144%	202:15	05:11	20	265:27	18%	
326	12%	1,851:46	05:25	22	2,577:06	-4%	
103	4%	528:39	04:45	41	1,012:05	24%	
68	-28%	367:59	05:02	27	483:22	-51%	
53	66%	302:29	05:02	18	359:29	174%	
33	0%	127:20	02:49	13	253:38	80%	
16	-33%	130:04	04:38	11	200:14	-1%	
7	75%	30:39	03:49	5	97:07	149%	
280	-2%	1,487:10	04:20	21	2,405:55	4%	
68	-12%	301:30	03:32	14	491:52	6%	
62	5%	166:47	02:25	25	201:45	117%	
37	-30%	136:26	03:10	11	404:29	-20%	
30	0%	88:02	02:45	12	123:06	-23%	
197	-10%	692:45	02:58	15	1,221:12	0%	
114	39%	571:23	04:53	11	635:59	35%	
49	104%	374:40	05:51	20	420:57	56%	
34	-44%	144:55	03:22	23	253:20	-60%	
18	-18%	107:58	03:51	12	212:36	-14%	
9	-31%	18:28	03:41	5	73:26	26%	
224	11%	1,217:24	04:19	12	1,596:18	-5%	
50	0%	290:56	05:17	25	323:06	-37%	
42	-11%	193:35	04:18	10	299:17	1%	
36	-47%	90:50	02:01	10	174:14	-21%	
128	-22%	575:21	03:52	13	796:37	-23%	
2683	2%	13,970:32	-	-	19,703:14	-3%	
64	-	332:37	4:37	24	469:07	-	

# Citizens Information



[citizensinformation.ie](http://citizensinformation.ie)



**0761 07 4000** - Mon to Fri, 9am - 8pm



**Drop in** - 215 locations nationwide

The Citizens Information Board provides independent information, advice and advocacy on public and social services through **citizensinformation.ie**, the Citizens Information Phone Service and the network of Citizens Information Services. It is responsible for the Money Advice and Budgeting Service and provides advocacy services for people with disabilities.

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