



# INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY PROGRAMME

## A GUIDE FOR ADVOCATES + OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

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# WHAT IS THE ADVOCACY PROGRAMME?

THE INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY PROGRAMME CENTRES ON SUPPORTING SEPARATED CHILDREN IN FINDING THEIR OWN VOICE BY MATCHING CHILDREN WITH ADVOCATES WHO ACT AS MENTORS.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME IS TO PROMOTE THE CHILD'S INTEGRATION INTO IRISH SOCIETY AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ASYLUM PROCESS.

THERE ARE ADVOCATES WORKING IN DUBLIN, GALWAY, LIMERICK, CORK AND WATERFORD.

THE INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE ASSIGNED TO EACH SEPARATED CHILD IS TASKED WITH ADVOCATING ON THEIR BEHALF IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. THEY ALSO ASSIST IN LINKING THE CHILD WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES AND SUPPORTING THE CHILD ON A PERSONAL LEVEL THROUGHOUT THE ASYLUM APPLICATION PROCEDURE OR DURING A TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATION.

THE AIM OF THE ADVOCACY PROGRAMME IS TO ENSURE GREATER CONTINUITY FOR THE SEPARATED CHILD AS THEY NAVIGATE THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM, TO GUARANTEE THEIR RIGHTS AND SECURITY, AND TO EMPOWER THEM TO BE THEIR OWN PROTECTORS.

# WHO ARE THE ADVOCATES + WHO DO WE WORK WITH?

THE ADVOCATES ARE VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE TRAINED AND VETTED BY THE IRISH REFUGEE COUNCIL. THE ADVOCATES COME FROM A VARIETY OF PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS, FOR EXAMPLE: SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS, BARRISTERS AND SOLICITORS, YOUTH WORKERS, STUDENTS AND PEOPLE FROM ACROSS THE MIGRANT SECTOR.

THE ROLE OF THE ADVOCATE IS TO BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD BASED ON TRUST. THE MAIN 'PROGRAMME OF WORK' SHARED BETWEEN THE ADVOCATE AND THE CHILD IS A 'GOALS PLAN'. THE AIM OF THE PLAN IS TO SET GOALS FOR 6 MONTHS AND 1 YEAR (BOTH BIG AND SMALL OBJECTIVES) AND TO WORK TOWARDS THESE TOGETHER. ADDITIONALLY, THE ADVOCATE SUPPORTS THE CHILD IN ENSURING THAT THEIR BASIC NEEDS ARE MET. THROUGH THIS PROCESS ADVOCATES MAY COMMUNICATE WITH SOCIAL WORKERS AND/OR CARE-PROVIDERS, TEACHERS, SOLICITORS ETC.

THE NUMBER OF VISITS BETWEEN THE CHILD AND THE ADVOCATE IS DETERMINED BY THE CHILD'S NEEDS / INTERESTS. SOME MEET ONCE PER WEEK AND OTHERS MEET ONCE EVERY TWO OR THREE WEEKS.

# OUR METHODOLOGY

THE WORK OF THE ADVOCACY PROGRAMME IS GUIDED BY THE CORE STANDARDS FOR GUARDIANS THAT WERE DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE 'CLOSING A PROTECTION GAP' PROJECT. THE STANDARDS FORM THE BACKDROP TO THE TRAINING THAT ALL ADVOCATES RECEIVE.

THE STANDARDS REFLECT THE RIGHTS CONTAINED WITHIN THE 'UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD' (1989), SPECIFICALLY:

## ARTICLE 2 - NON - DISCRIMINATION

THIS ARTICLE ESTABLISHES THE PRINCIPLE THAT ALL CHILDREN SHOULD ENJOY THE RIGHTS OF THE CONVENTION WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION. IN THIS RESPECT, THE ACCESSIBILITY OF RIGHTS WITHIN THE CONVENTION IS NOT SOMETHING THAT CAN ONLY BE ENJOYED BY CITIZEN CHILDREN BUT BY ALL CHILDREN, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR NATIONALITY OR IMMIGRATION STATUS, INCLUDING THOSE THAT ARE IN SEARCH FOR ASYLUM, REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN AND STATELESS CHILDREN.

## ARTICLE 3 - BEST INTERESTS

THIS ARTICLE ESTABLISHES THE PRINCIPLE THAT ALL INSTITUTIONS, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GIVING PRIMARY CONSIDERATION TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD IN ALL ACTIONS THAT CONCERN AND IMPACT UPON THEM. WHILE THIS IS A BROAD DUTY AND ONE THAT IS CRITICIZED FOR BEING WITHOUT DEFINITION, IT CAN BE GIVEN MORE PRECISION AND

MEANING WHEN IT IS CONSIDERED AS BEING THE RIGHT THAT ALL OTHERS ARE BUILT UPON. THEREFORE, ALL THE RIGHTS THAT TOGETHER MAKE UP THE CONVENTION ARE IN THE CHILD'S BEST INTERESTS AND ALL DECISIONS THAT ARE MADE WITH THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD IN MIND, WILL BE ONES THAT ENGAGE ALL OTHER RIGHTS.

## ARTICLE 6 - SURVIVAL, LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT

THIS ARTICLE ESTABLISHES THE PRINCIPLE THAT ALL CHILDREN HAVE THE '*INHERENT RIGHT TO LIFE*' AND FURTHER ESTABLISHES THE STANDARD THAT STATES SHALL ENSURE FOR ALL CHILDREN, AND TO THE '*MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE*', THEIR RIGHT TO '*SURVIVAL, LIFE AND DEVELOPMENT*'. IT IS CENTRAL TO ALL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ACROSS TIME, ENTAILING IMMEDIATE, MEDIUM TERM AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS, AND PLACES OBLIGATIONS ON STATES THAT EXTEND BEYOND CHILDHOOD AND INTO ADULTHOOD.

## ARTICLE 12 - PARTICIPATION AND THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS VIEWS FREELY

THIS ARTICLE ESTABLISHES THE PRINCIPLE THAT ALL CHILDREN, WITH SUFFICIENT CAPACITY FOR SELF-EXPRESSION, SHOULD BE ENABLED TO DO THIS FREELY, AND PARTICULARLY SO WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF JUDICIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES THAT WILL INFLUENCE IN THEIR LIVES. THIS ENTAILS THE RIGHT TO DIRECT OR INDIRECT EXPRESSION. IT PLACES OBLIGATIONS ON STATES MORE GENERALLY TO GENERATE FAVOURABLE CONTEXTS AND MECHANISMS FOR EXPRESSION. MORE SPECIFICALLY, IT ENGAGES OBLIGATIONS UPON STATES TO ESTABLISH GUARDIANSHIP SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN IN IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM PROCEEDINGS.

THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS GO THROUGH THE STANDARDS AND HOW THEY ARE USED BY OUR ADVOCATES.

# STANDARD 1

MEET REGULARLY WITH THE CHILD AND DISCUSS DECISIONS THEY HAVE TO MAKE...



ADVOCATE FOR ALL DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD, AIMED AT THE PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD



INVOLVE OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS IN THE DISCUSSION (E.G. THE CHILD'S SOCIAL WORKER)...

ASSESS WHAT IS IN THE CHILD'S BEST INTEREST, BASED ON THE VIEWS OF THE CHILD AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES AT HAND

# STANDARD 2

ENSURE PLANS ARE BASED ON THE VIEWS OF THE CHILD AND SHARED WITH THE CHILD



ENSURE THE CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN EVERY DECISION WHICH AFFECTS THE CHILD



PROVIDE INFORMATION IN A CHILD FRIENDLY WAY & CHECK THAT THE CHILD UNDERSTANDS IT



LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE CHILD, MANAGE EXPECTATIONS AND BE OPEN TO FEEDBACK...

# STANDARD 3

PROTECT THE SAFETY OF  
THE CHILD

GIVE THE HIGHEST  
PRIORITY TO THE  
CHILD'S SAFETY

BE AWARE OF THE  
SIGNS OF CHILD  
ABUSE &  
TRAFFICKING

LET THE CHILD  
KNOWS THAT HE/  
SHE CAN VOICE  
CONCERNS

ONLY BREAK  
CONFIDENTIALITY  
IF A CHILD IS AT  
RISK

ENSURE VICTIMS  
GET APPROPRIATE  
TREATMENT

BE OPEN TO BEING  
MONITORED ON  
YOUR OWN  
BEHAVIOUR



# STANDARD 4

ACT AS AN ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS  
OF THE CHILD

BE ASSERTIVE &  
COMMITTED

DEFEND THE  
RIGHTS OF THE  
CHILD

SHOW EMOTIONAL  
STRENGTH

OPPOSE DECISIONS  
NOT IN BEST  
INTEREST OF THE  
CHILD

PURSUE FAIR  
PROCEEDINGS FOR  
CHILD



# STANDARD 5

ACT AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN  
AND FOCAL POINT FOR THE  
CHILD & OTHER ACTORS  
INVOLVED



KEEP IN CONTACT  
WITH RELEVANT  
ACTORS & ENSURE  
THEY ARE  
INFORMED ABOUT  
ALL DECISIONS  
ABOUT THE CHILD

HI, I WAS  
JUST WONDERING  
WHAT THE LATEST WAS  
WITH X'S ASYLUM  
CLAIM



ATTEND MEETINGS  
WITH THE CHILD  
WHERE NECESSARY

I AM HERE TO  
SUPPORT X AS HE ASKED  
ME TO ATTEND



HELP THE CHILD  
ESTABLISH LINKS  
WITH THE  
COMMUNITY &  
DEVELOP  
RELATIONSHIPS  
THAT GIVE A SENSE  
OF BELONGING

I WAS THINKING THAT  
TODAY WE COULD GO AND  
VISIT YOUR LOCAL CHURCH/  
MOSQUE/SYNAGOGUE..



YES, OKAY  
THEN



# STANDARD 6

EXPLORE DURABLE  
SOLUTIONS FOR THE  
YOUNG PERSON



CHALLENGE OTHERS  
TO PROVE THAT  
PROPOSED  
SOLUTIONS ARE IN  
THE BEST INTEREST  
OF THE YOUNG  
PERSON

WE HAVE  
DECIDED TO  
PLACE X IN  
FOSTER CARE

WHAT IS THE  
BASIS FOR THAT  
DECISION?



I WAS  
THINKING WE COULD  
CREATE A SCRAPBOOK  
TOGETHER ABOUT OUR  
EXPERIENCES IN  
IRELAND..



SUPPORT THE  
INTEGRATION OF  
THE CHILD IN THE  
HOST COUNTRY

WHEN YOU  
TURN 18 YOUR  
ENTITLEMENTS  
ARE GOING TO  
CHANGE..



PREPARE THE CHILD  
FOR THE CHANGES  
THAT WILL OCCUR  
AFTER TURNING 18



# STANDARD 7

TREAT THE CHILD WITH RESPECT & DIGNITY

DEMONSTRATE APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

AT A MEAL TO CELEBRATE EID...

I WILL BE DISCREET WITH MY GIFT FOR X



RESPECT THE CHILD'S IDENTITY, PRIVACY & CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

SUPPORT THE CHILD IN DEVELOPING PEER RELATIONSHIPS

SHOW A FLEXIBLE APPROACH, TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF THE CHILD



# STANDARD 8

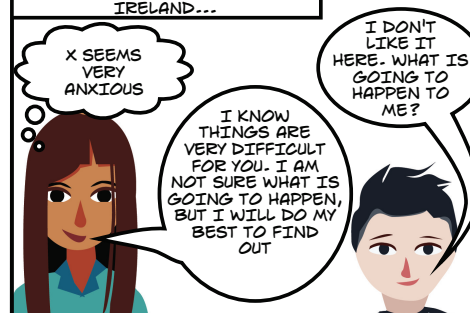
FORM A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILD BUILT ON MUTUAL TRUST, OPENNESS & CONFIDENTIALITY

X HAS JUST ARRIVED IN IRELAND...

X SEEMS VERY ANXIOUS

I DON'T LIKE IT HERE. WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME?

I KNOW THINGS ARE VERY DIFFICULT FOR YOU. I AM NOT SURE WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT I WILL DO MY BEST TO FIND OUT



ALWAYS BE HONEST & KEEP YOUR PROMISES

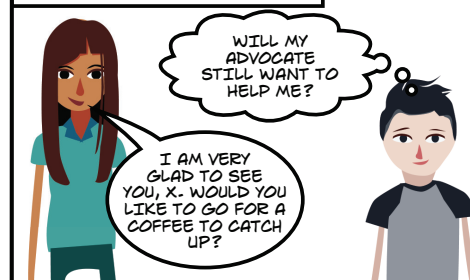
BE EMPATHETIC TOWARDS THE CHILD

GIVE MORAL SUPPORT

X HAS RETURNED AFTER TEMPORARILY GOING MISSING...

WILL MY ADVOCATE STILL WANT TO HELP ME?

I AM VERY GLAD TO SEE YOU, X. WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO FOR A COFFEE TO CATCH UP?



PAY ATTENTION TO VERBAL & NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

MAKE CLEAR THAT A CHILD THAT DISAPPEARS IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO RETURN

# IDEAS ON SPEND TIME

## HAVE INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS IN NICE LOCATIONS!

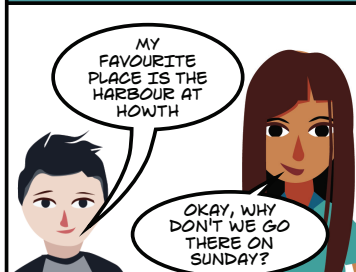
AT A RESTAURANT...



## UNDERTAKE SHARED LEARNING EXPERIENCES



## VISIT THE CHILD'S FAVOURITE PLACES



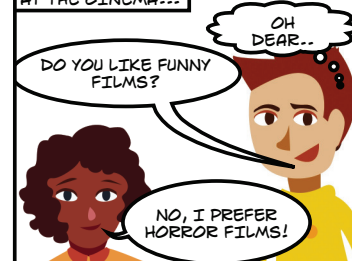
## BE ACTIVE TOGETHER



# WAYS TO TOGETHER

## DO FUN THINGS!

AT THE CINEMA...



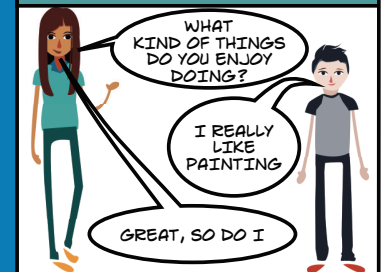
## OFFER DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES



## RECORD YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH THE CHILD



## EXPLORE COMMON INTERESTS





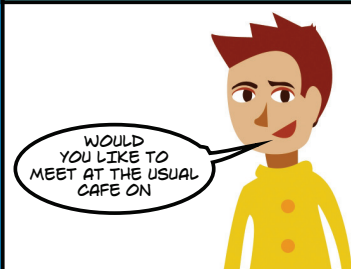
# STANDARD 9

BE AS ACCESSIBLE AS POSSIBLE

BE EASY TO REACH & RESPOND QUICKLY TO DIFFICULTIES



VISIT THE CHILD ON A REGULAR BASIS



KEEP IN TOUCH EVEN WHERE THERE IS NO SPECIFIC NEED TO DO SO



COMMUNICATE IN A WAY THAT FITS THE AGE & DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD



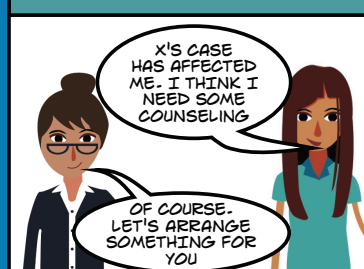
# STANDARD 10

EQUIP YOURSELF WITH RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE & COMPETENCIES

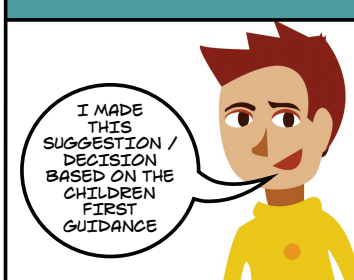
MANAGE YOUR CASELOAD & AVAILABLE RESOURCES



KNOW YOUR LIMITS & SEEK SUPPORT WHERE NECESSARY



BE ACCOUNTABLE & WORK TO A SET METHODOLOGY



BE OPEN TO LEARNING / DEVELOPMENT & SUPERVISION / MONITORING



TO MAKE A REFERRAL TO THE ADVOCACY  
PROGRAMME, BECOME A FUNDER OR TO MAKE  
A DONATION, CONTACT:

IRISH REFUGEE COUNCIL  
37 DAME STREET  
DUBLIN 2

01 764 5854

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The **One** Foundation



CHILDREN'S  
RIGHTS  
ALLIANCE