



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

CIS Advocacy

Annual Report 2023



“I firmly believe that without the work and support of the CIS, the City Council would not have listened to me. I would use the Service again and I would definitely recommend the CIS Advocacy Service to people I know.”

South Munster CIS client

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“Thanks so much for your help. I couldn’t have managed this on my own – I wouldn’t have even known where to start. I can’t thank you enough for all you did for me.”

North Munster CIS client



Foreword to the CIS Advocacy Annual Report 2023

I am delighted to present the Citizens Information Services (CIS) Advocacy Annual Report 2023. This report highlights the scope and impact of advocacy work carried out by the staff in the CIS network nationwide.

CISs offer a free advocacy service to the public in many areas, including social welfare, employment, housing, immigration, health, consumer issues and education. The service supports and empowers individuals by ensuring their interests and voices are represented in accessing their rights and entitlements to social services. The CIS advocacy service offer is provided with the expertise and commitment of CIS staff.

The CIS Advocacy Annual Report 2023 presents advocacy case studies which demonstrate the commitment of CIS staff to improve people’s lives. The positive impacts and outcomes achieved for clients and the complexity of the issues presenting to CISs are evidenced in client testimonials in the report.

At a national level, the number of new advocacy cases continues to increase. It is positive to see a 4% increase in new long-term advocacy cases from 1,429 in 2022 to 1,678 in 2023 and a 14% increase in short-term advocacy cases from 3,322 to 3,788. The report clearly shows the need for CIS advocacy services. Since 2021 there was a 52% increase in the number of social welfare cases and a 6% increase in the number of housing cases. Only with the expertise and commitment of CIS staff, can this service be delivered.

On behalf of the Citizens Information Board, I wish to take the opportunity to thank all CIS staff and volunteers for the crucial role they play in supporting people to access their rights and entitlements. I look forward to working with you to continue to deliver a high-quality CIS advocacy service. I would also like to extend my thanks to the members of the CIS Advocacy Development Group for their commitment to the development of high-quality advocacy services.

Stephanie Coleman,

CIB Advocacy Standards and Development Manager

About Citizens Information Services (CIS)

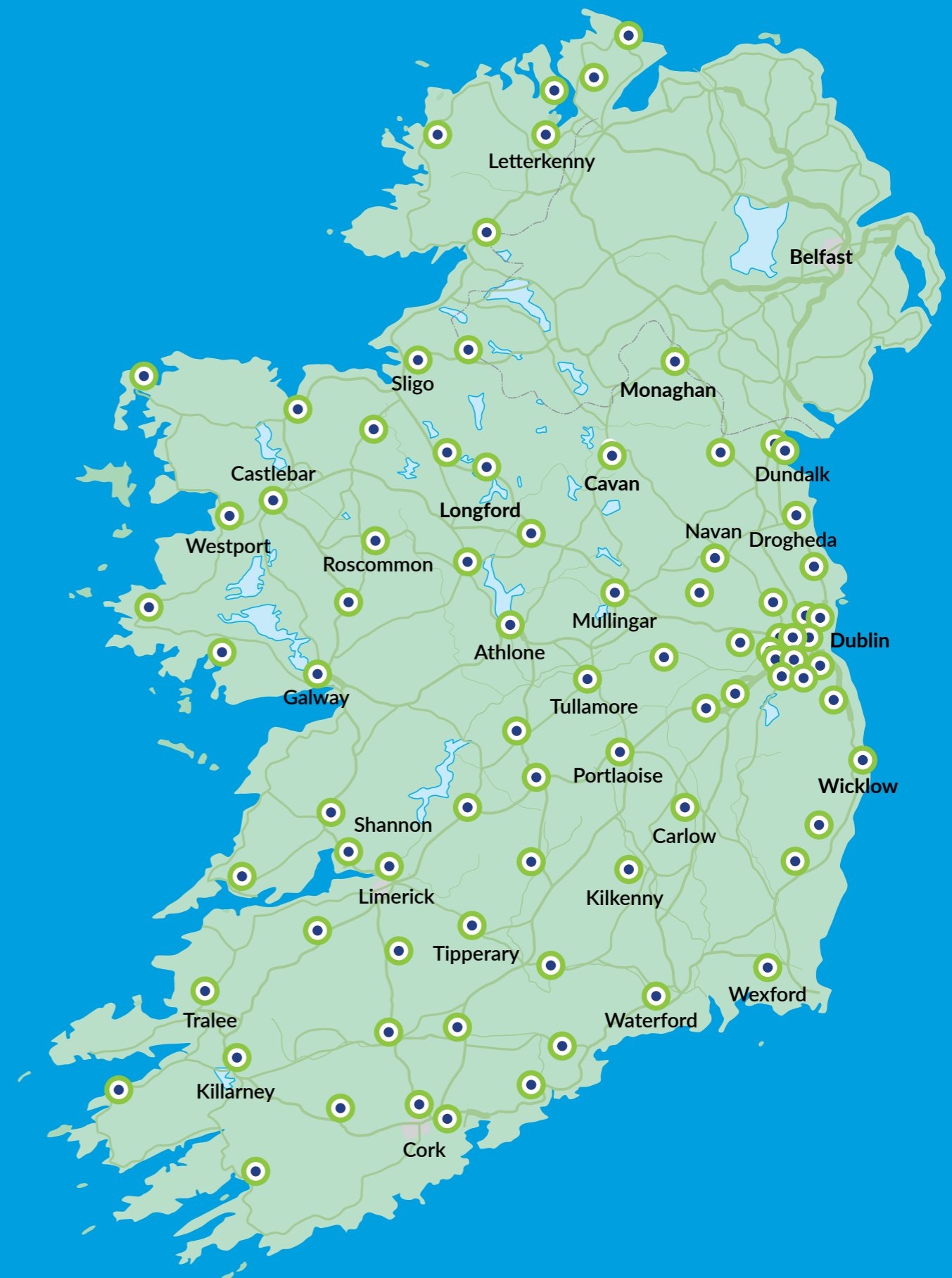
The network of Citizens Information Services (CIS) provides free, impartial and confidential information, advice and advocacy services to members of the public, in accordance with a service-level agreement it holds with the Citizens Information Board (CIB). The Citizens Information Board is the statutory body which supports the provision of information, advice and advocacy on a broad range of public and social services. It provides the Citizens Information website, citizensinformation.ie, funds and supports the network of Citizens Information Centres and the Citizens Information Phone Service. The statutory remit of the Citizens Information Board (CIB) is set out in Section 7(1) of the Comhairle Act 2000, as amended by the Citizens Information Act 2007.

Through a network of 95 Citizens Information Centres (CIC) nationwide and 24 outreach locations, CISs provide an information and advice service in-person, by telephone and by email. When required, the CIS provides further support through an advocacy service across a wide range of areas, including social welfare, employment, housing, health, education, immigration and consumer. CIS staff work with clients supporting, representing and empowering them. This work includes writing letters with or on behalf of the client, negotiating with third parties on the client's behalf, representing clients at hearings with the Social Welfare Appeals Office and the Workplace Relations Commission.

CIS staff are highly trained and are further supported by Advocacy Support Workers whose professional knowledge, expertise, and mentoring support staff to work on complex advocacy cases. People can visit Citizens Information Centres in-person or contact by phone or email. Check our website for details (<https://centres.citizensinformation.ie/>)

“CIS was there for me in my hard times and responded quickly to all my queries. CIS helped me win the appeal made for one parent family payment, child benefit and supplementary welfare allowance. CIS service is unique, and I am pleased with their services so far.”

North Leinster CIS client



How did people find their way to the CIS?

In 2023, just over 80% of all long-term advocacy clients self-referred to CIS, while 8% of clients were referred by friends and family.

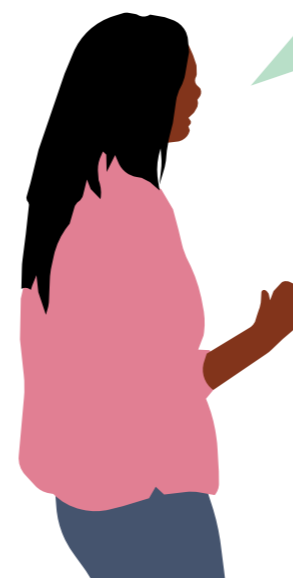
Referral method	Number of Clients	% of Clients
Self-Referral	2,233	85%
Signposted/Supported by a friend/family	243	8%
Other	35	1%
Signposted/Referred from another Statutory Organisation	32	1%
Signposted/Referred from NGO/Community Organisation	27	1%
Signposted/Referred from MABS	20	<1%
Signposted/Referred by Dept of Social Protection	17	<1%
Signposted/Referred from another CIS	16	<1%
Signposted/Referred from NAS	3	<1%

Supporting people with disabilities

In 2023, 40% (1,042) of clients supported through long-term advocacy cases were recorded as having at least one disability.

The table below identifies the type and the total number of disabilities reported by our clients. Total Cases includes all cases open at any point during the year, including existing cases carried over from previous years plus new cases. New Cases only includes cases created during 2023.

Disability Type	Total Cases	New Cases
Physical	614	410
Mental Health	458	314
Intellectual	83	51
Learning	74	49
Autism Spectrum	60	40
Sensory	35	25
Acquired Brain Injury	20	13



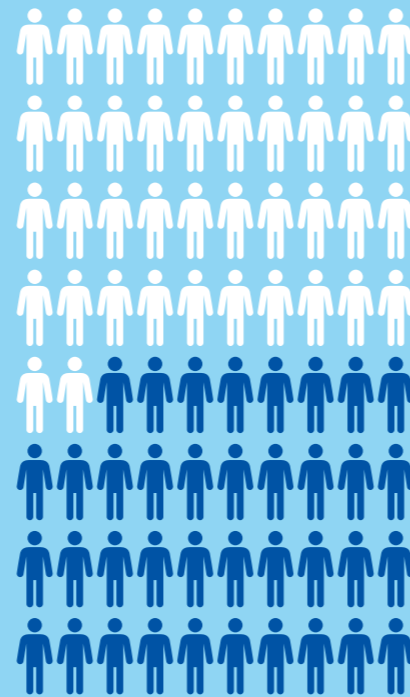
“I achieved the desired outcome, all thanks to the CIS. The Information Officer knew every direction to go with each problem I had. The Information Officer went above and beyond; she is an exceptional lady to represent CIS. Very professional staff, everything is explained to you, give the best support to you, will listen to all of your concerns, highly recommend CIS.”
South Munster CIS client

2023 in Numbers

Total Advocacy Cases
5,532

Short-term
2,936

Long-term
2,626



Total Hours Spent
18,565

Short-term
2,879

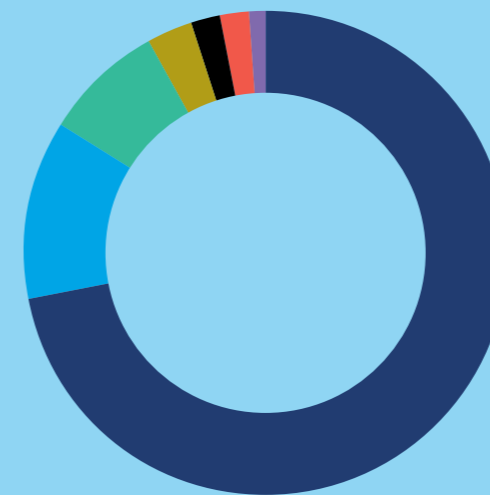
Long-term
15,686



Nationality

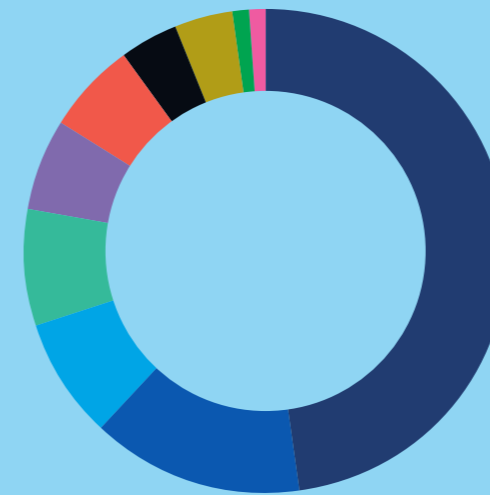


Categories of Long-term Advocacy Cases



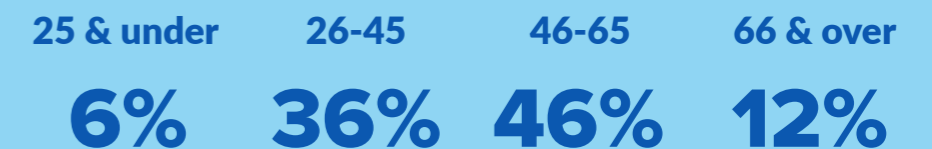
- 72%** Social Welfare
- 12%** Employment
- 8%** Housing
- 3%** Other
- 2%** Consumer
- 2%** Immigration
- 1%** Health
- <1%** Education

Categories of Short-term Advocacy Cases



- 48%** Social Welfare
- 13%** Housing
- 8%** Money & Tax
- 8%** Immigration
- 6%** Health
- 6%** Employment
- 4%** Consumer
- 4%** Other
- 1%** Education
- 1%** Travel & Recreation

Age



Short-term advocacy cases

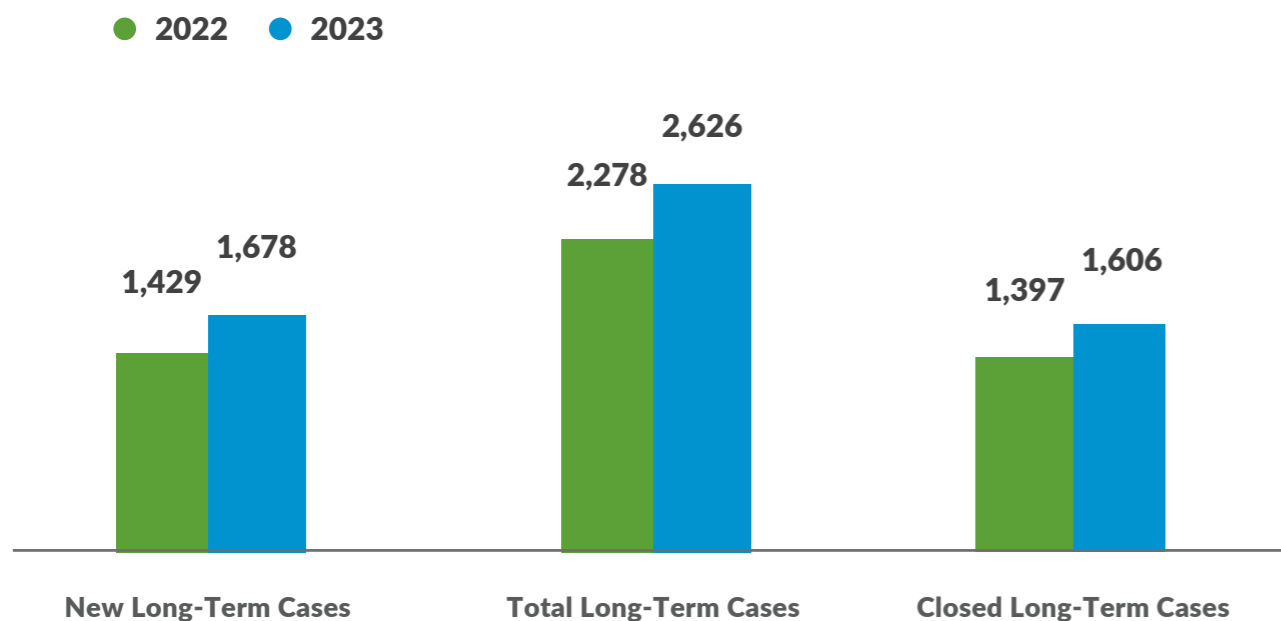
Short-term advocacy work with clients generally involves one or two engagements or actions. Short-term advocacy work involves making phone calls, preparing forms, and writing letters or emails to employers, landlords, local authorities, and government departments or agencies with or on behalf of clients.

In 2023, Citizens Information Services (CIS) worked on **4,614 total short-term advocacy cases**. 3,788 of these cases were new which represents a 14% increase from the 3,322 new cases in 2022.

1,571 of those new cases **became long-term advocacy cases**, along with 107 which were already open at the beginning of 2023. This means that there were **2,936 short-term advocacy cases** excluding the ones that progressed to a long-term case.

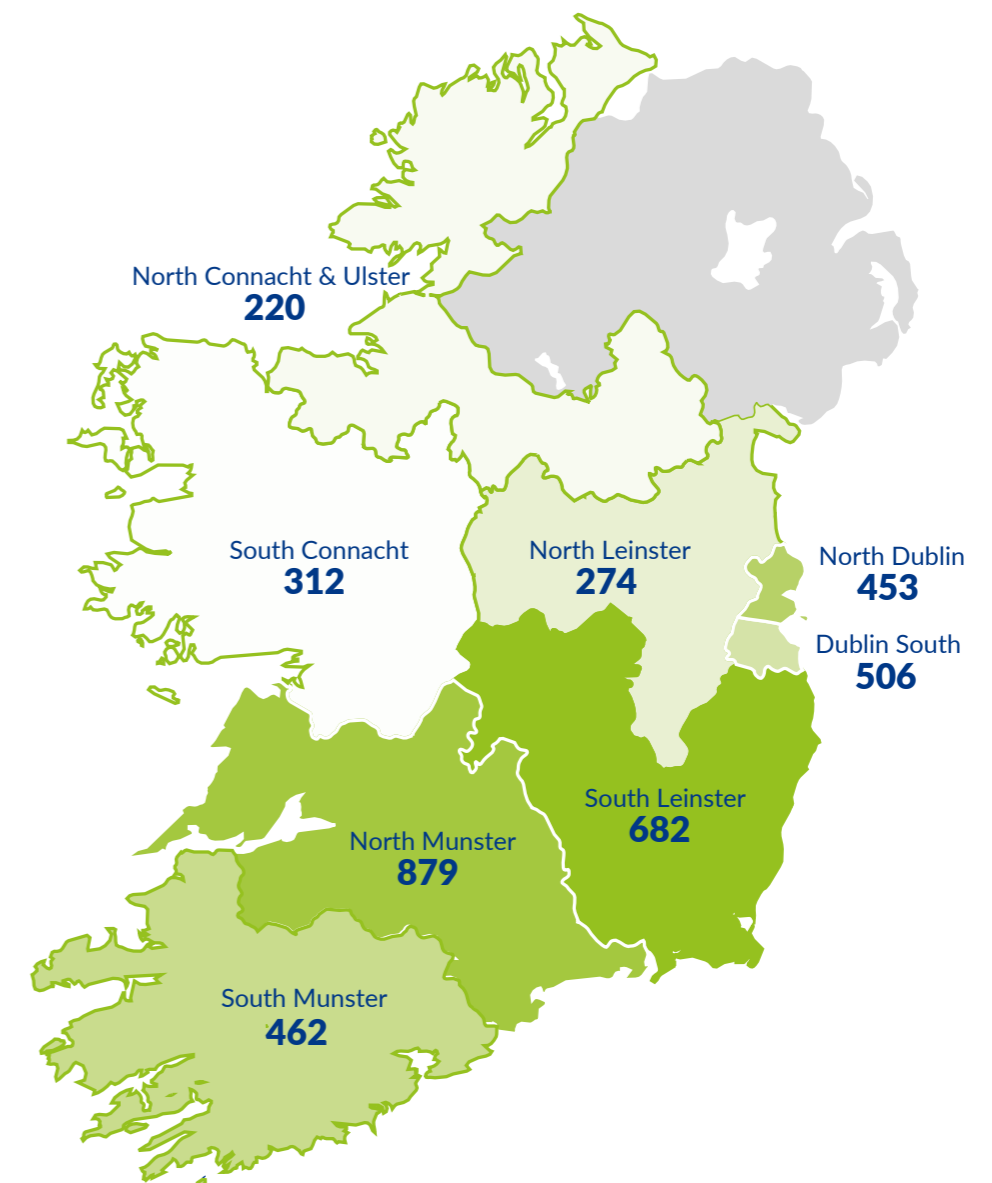
This short-term work took **2,879 hours** and involved over **9,000 recorded actions** such as preparing and filling forms for clients, writing letters and emails, making phone calls, collecting information and carrying out some research on behalf of the client.

In 2023, CIS staff closed **2,150 short-term advocacy cases**.



The map below shows the number of new short-term advocacy cases opened in each region in 2023.

New short-term advocacy cases by region



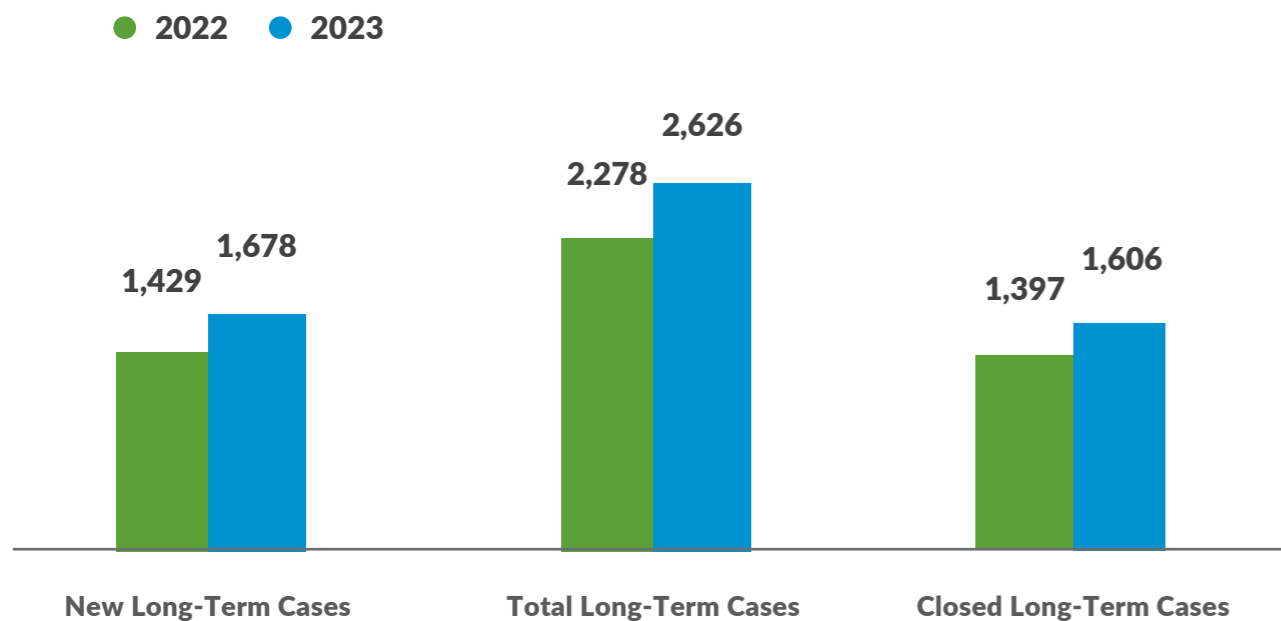
Long-term advocacy cases

Long-term advocacy cases are open for an average duration of 10 months and involves negotiating with third parties, progressing complex appeals, and representing clients at meetings and hearings, including the Social Welfare Appeals Office and the Workplace Relations Commission.

In 2023, CIS staff worked on **2,626 long-term cases**, 1,678 of which were new. This represents a 17% increase from the 1,429 new cases in 2022.

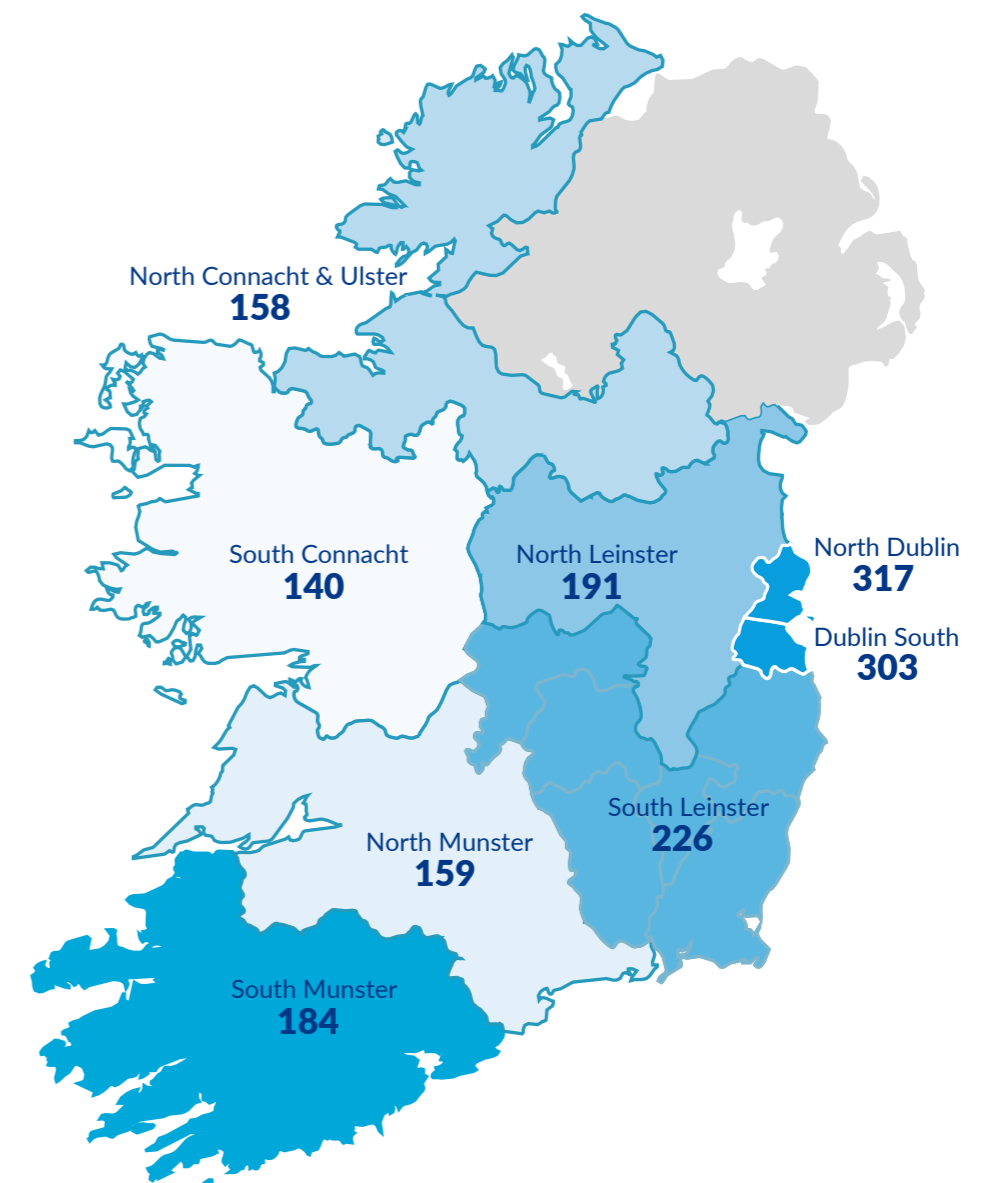
Most of these new long-term advocacy cases (74%) were related to social welfare issues, followed by employment (9%).

CIS staff spent **15,686 hours** working on long-term advocacy casework. In 2023, 1,606 long-term advocacy cases were closed.



The map below shows the number of new long-term advocacy cases opened in each region in 2023.

New long-term advocacy cases by region



Social Welfare

There were 1,882 total social welfare cases in 2023, 1,238 of which were new. Social welfare cases typically involve supporting people to appeal a negative decision on a social welfare payment application or to resolve an issue with an existing social welfare payment.

The table below provides a breakdown of the type of payments involved in social welfare cases. Common issues recorded with these types of cases include issues with the client's medical eligibility, means, overpayments, or habitual residency condition (HRC). Cases can sometimes involve more than one type of payment. The successful outcome is calculated for cases closed in 2023.

Social Welfare Payment Type	Total Cases	New Cases	Common Issues Recorded	% of Closed Cases with successful outcome
Disability Allowance	581	387	Medical Eligibility (60%), Means (9%), Overpayment (3%), HRC (3%)	77%
Invalidity Pension	325	229	Medical Eligibility (63%), Overpayment (3%)	82%
Carer's Benefit and Allowance	320	209	Medical Eligibility (58%), Means (9%), Overpayment (7%)	63%
Domiciliary Care Allowance	112	70	Medical Eligibility (57%), Overpayment (3%)	73%
Jobseekers Allowance	106	66	Overpayment (42%), Means (16%)	64%
Other	104	63	Overpayment (22%), Medical Eligibility (18%), Means (13%)	75%
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	93	56	Means (28%), Medical Eligibility (8%), Overpayment (9%)	74%
State Pension Non-Contributory	78	49	Means (37%), Overpayment (18%)	83%

Social Welfare Payment Type	Total Cases	New Cases	Common Issues Recorded	% of Closed Cases with successful outcome
State Pension Contributory	51	26	Overpayment (14%), Means (6%)	82%
Other Illness Payments	40	20	Medical Eligibility (27%), Overpayment (27%), Means (5%)	86%
One-Parent Family	36	25	Overpayment (28%), Means (28%)	69%
Child Benefit	34	19	HRC (35%), Overpayment (6%)	85%
Working Family Payment	27	20	Means (22%), Overpayment (19%)	83%
Jobseeker's Benefit	22	14	Overpayment (41%), Means (5%),	83%
Widow/er's & Surviving Civil Partner's Pensions	17	11	Overpayment (18%)	75%
Guardian's Payments	16	10	Means (6%), Overpayment (6%)	83%
Secondary Payments	16	10	Means (18%), Overpayment (12%)	100%
Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP)	14	2	Overpayment (86%),	67%
Partial Capacity Benefit	7	5	Overpayment (29%), Means (14%)	100%
Activation & Education Schemes	2	2	N/A	N/A
Blind Pension	1	1	N/A	N/A
Maternity/Paternity	1	1	N/A	N/A

How did the CIS help?

CIS staff supported clients by drafting appeal submissions, attending oral hearings with or on behalf of the client. Of the 1,121 social welfare cases closed in 2023, the recorded interventions are outlined below. Some cases may include more than one intervention.

Intervention	Number	% of Social Welfare cases
Appeal	699	34%
DSP Review	267	13%
Application Support	100	5%
Oral Hearing with CIS in attendance	52	3%
Informal Negotiation	40	2%
Section 317 Review	26	1%
Formal Complaint	10	<1%
Oral Hearing (CIS not present)	8	<1%
Section 318 Review	7	<1%
Legal Referral	5	<1%
Ombudsman	5	<1%
NGO Referral (Non-legal)	3	<1%

Employment

There were 305 employment cases in 2023, 145 of which were new. Employment cases can involve multiple issues and topics typically include supporting clients to receive their legal entitlements as an employee or to resolve issues where they have been treated unfairly by their employer.

Topics	Total Cases	New Cases	% of Closed Cases with successful outcome
Redundancy	109	37	84%
Pay	93	58	67%
Public Holidays & Annual Leave	69	46	89%
Unfair Dismissal	64	34	68%
Terms and Conditions	48	27	65%
Minimum Notice	41	28	79%
Hours of Work	26	17	53%
Other	18	12	69%
Health and Safety	12	4	60%
Discriminatory Dismissal	11	6	50%
Disciplinary Issues	10	4	86%
Discriminatory Treatment	10	0	N/A
Equality	10	4	50%
Constructive Dismissal	8	5	50%
Maternity & Paternity	5	2	67%
TUPE	4	2	100%

How did the CIS help?

Of the 184 employment cases closed in 2023, the recorded interventions are outlined below. Cases may include more than one intervention.

Intervention	Number	% of Employment cases
Direct Negotiations with Employer	95	33%
WRC Hearing with CIS	43	15%
Client Disengaged / Case Withdrawn	34	12%
Settlement Agreement	30	10%
Other	28	10%
WRC Mediation	23	8%
Prepared/Submitted WRC complaint form	11	4%
WRC Hearing (CIS not present)	8	3%
Prepared submission for WRC hearing	7	2%
Labour Court Hearing with CIS	6	2%
Prepared/submitted redundancy form	5	2%
Direct negotiations with the Liquidator/ Receiver	1	<1%
Labour Court Hearing (CIS not present)	1	<1%

Housing

There were 196 total housing cases in 2023, 132 of which were new. The housing cases typically involve supporting clients to secure local authority housing, housing payments or resolve issues with both social housing and private residential tenancies (PRT).

Topics	Total Cases	New Cases	% of Closed Cases with successful outcome
Eligibility for Local Authority Housing	52	33	91%
Other Housing	41	35	89%
Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)	39	22	84%
PRT Eviction	21	16	85%
Rent Supplement	18	12	89%
Notice	17	9	82%
Local Authority Standards	12	7	29%
Repairs	10	7	100%
PRT Rent Increases	9	8	83%
Local Authority Tenancy Succession	7	6	67%
PRT Deposit Retention	7	4	71%
PRT Standards	7	3	100%
Housing Grants	6	3	67%
Traveller Accommodation	5	3	N/A
Local Authority Eviction	3	2	100%

How did CIS help?

Of the 120 housing cases closed in 2023, the recorded interventions are outlined below. Cases may include more than one intervention.

Intervention	Number	% of housing cases
Direct negotiations	69	47%
Other	27	27%
Client Disengaged / Case Withdrawn	17	12%
Legal Referral	5	3%
RTB Adjudication Hearing with CIS in attendance	4	3%
Formal meeting with CIS and Local Authority	3	2%
Ombudsman	3	2%
RTB Adjudication Hearing (no CIS presence)	3	2%
NGO Referral	2	1%
RTB Tribunal Hearing with CIS in attendance	1	<1%
WRC (Equal Status) Adjudication Hearing	1	<1%

Immigration

There were 43 total immigration cases, 27 of which were new. Most of the cases were related to citizenship and other topics included renewals, change of residency status and family reunification.

Health

There were 26 total health cases, 19 of which were new. Most of these cases were related to medical cards and other issues related to health care.

Consumer

There were 46 total consumer cases, 26 of which were new. Topics included issues related to utilities, financial, retail and insurance.

Education

There were 10 total education cases, 6 of which were new. Most of the cases were related to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) and education access.

“One of the best services I’ve ever received in my life. I would recommend the service to any person out there who needs support and on needs, especially people with a disability. The Information Officer helping was remarkable, very patient especially with me because I’m not the easiest person to deal with.”

North Dublin CIS client



[contents](#)

Case Studies



Social Welfare

Working Family Payment and 50/50 Co-Parenting

Issues

The client applied for and was awarded Working Family Payment when her One-Parent Family Payment was stopped due to the 50/50 co-parenting arrangement she began with her child's father. This arrangement saw the child spending equal amount of time with both parents. She was advised to apply for Working Family Payment following an interview with the Social Welfare Inspector regarding her One-Parent Family Payment. Within one month of her application being awarded, the Department reviewed her working hours and sent her a letter to say that she was not working the required 38 hours per fortnight to qualify for the payment. Her hours then increased to the required minimum and the Department informed her they were satisfied.

Approximately one month later, she received another letter from the Working Family Payment Section stating that her application has been disallowed as she did not have a qualified child, as defined under social welfare legislation, who normally resides with her. This was presumably because of the 50/50 care arrangement she had with her ex-partner.

Actions

The CIS submitted an initial appeal letter to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on behalf of the client with the grounds that the client is in receipt of Child Benefit for her child, that no other person was claiming Working Family Payment for this qualified child and that one Working Family Payment claim can be awarded in respect of any child. The CIS requested a copy of the files from both Working Family Payment and the local social welfare office which administers the One-Parent Family Payment.

When the CIS received the client's One-Parent Family Payment file, the Information Officer could see notes on the Means Reporting Form (MRF) carried out by the Social Welfare Inspector by telephone with the client. The Social Welfare Inspector made notes that he advised the client to apply for Working Family Payment. The Information Officer could also see that the client sent an email to the Social Welfare Inspector confirming that she wished to close her One-Parent Family claim due to new 50/50 co-parenting arrangement. The client duly followed the advice of the Inspector to apply for Working Family Payment instead.

As the client's hours were now meeting the criteria for Working Family Payment and she was not advised to make a new application, the CIS sought to prepare a full appeal submission by first researching the legislation in respect of Working Family Payment and co-parenting arrangements. The client received a decision letter from the Social Welfare Appeals Office. The Chief Appeal Officer presented two questions for consideration:

- Does the appellant have a qualified child that normally resides with her, and
- Is the appellant engaged in full time remunerative employment as an employee as required by the legislation governing Working Family Payment

In relation to the first question, the Chief Appeals Officer wrote:

The rules for determining the normal residence of a qualified child are contained in Article 13 of the Social Welfare (Consolidated Claims, Payments and Control) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 142 of 2007). Article 13 (6) prescribes as follows:

“(6) Notwithstanding the provisions of sub-article (4), a qualified child resident with one parent who is living apart from the other parent and who is not claiming or in receipt of benefit or assistance shall be regarded as residing with the other parent if that other parent is contributing substantially to the child's maintenance.”

“benefit” or “assistance” is defined in Article 13 (1) as meaning any such payments under Parts 2 or 3 (other than guardian's payment (contributory), death benefit by way of orphans pension, guardian's payment (non-contributory), one parent family payment or supplementary welfare allowance);

For the purposes of Article 12(6), the evidence is that the appellant fully meets her child's daily living needs when the child resides with her. The available evidence is that “the other parent” (the child's father) is not receiving a “benefit” or “assistance” as defined in Article 13 (1). The evidence is that the appellant is receiving Child Benefit from the Department of Social Protection in respect of the child. Therefore, as the other parent is not claiming or in receipt of “benefit” or “assistance”, as defined in Article 13 (1), the appellant's child should be regarded as residing with the appellant at the times when they live with the other parent, for the purposes of Working Family Payment.

The child resides with the appellant at the times that she does not live with her father. For these reasons, I have concluded that the appellant's child falls within the legislative definition of “child”, in relation to family, as laid down in Section 227 of SWCA 2005. Section 227 informs that “child” means a qualified child as defined in section 2(3) who normally resides with that family. The child can be deemed to normally reside with the appellant, as a family, in accordance with the legislative definitions of “child” and “family”, laid down at Section 227 of the SWCA 2005. In the circumstances, this element of the appeal is allowed.

Outcome

Even though the appeal was only partially allowed, the evidence did not establish that the client was working a minimum of 38 hours per fortnight on a consistent basis in accordance with the legislation. This is an important decision given that 50/50 custody arrangements are becoming more common.

This decision sets a precedent and provides the context to the relevant legislation and the definition of ‘child’ and ‘family’ as laid down in Section 227 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005. The client was satisfied that the appeal relating to 50/50 co-parenting arrangements was allowed as she was passionate about the fact that a person should not be penalised for having this type of care arrangement between parents.

Source: South Leinster CIS

“I found the CIS most sincere. She really listened to my story. Good communication from beginning to the end. I understood exactly what I had to do and with her guidance and support got a good result. Excellent service”.

South Munster CIS client



Client supported to win Carer's Allowance appeal

Issues

The client cares for her mother who requires care and support throughout the day following a recent acute hospital stay. Upon the recommendation of her mother's GP, the client applied for Carer's Allowance. Her application was refused on the grounds that she did not provide continual supervision and assistance to her mother throughout the day. The client was very upset about the whole situation and did not understand why her application has been unsuccessful.

Actions

The CIS Information Officer listened carefully to the client's description of the level of care and assistance that she provides to her mother on a daily basis and agreed to support her to appeal the decision on her application. After receiving a copy of the client's file from the Department of Social Protection, the CIS drafted a detailed submission of appeal which outlined the reasons why the client should qualify for Carer's Allowance. This included a detailed statement of the care provided by the client to her mother and the 24/7 nature of it.

The appeal was initially unsuccessful so the CIS then made a request for an oral hearing to ensure that the case was dealt properly. An oral hearing was granted, and the Information Officer and the client prepared their case for presentation at this hearing. At the oral hearing, the Information Officer clearly articulated the level of care provided by the client to her mother.

Outcome

The client's appeal was successful and she was awarded Carer's Allowance. The payment was awarded from date of original claim and the client received €11,000 in arrears. The client was also supported to apply for secondary benefits such as household benefits package, and free travel pass to which she has an entitlement following the award of Carer's Allowance.

Source: North Munster CIS

Injured client supported with social welfare appeals

Issues

This client presented to the service suffering greatly from an injury which was preventing him from working. The client had applied for Invalidity Pension and Disability Allowance payments, but both payments were refused. The client requested assistance from the CIS to submit appeals against both negative decisions.

Actions

The CIS appealed the decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on the client's behalf and sought the client's file under Freedom of Information legislation. After reviewing the client's file, it was agreed to submit further grounds of appeal on the client's behalf by way of a submission.

The client was called to an oral hearing for the Disability Allowance appeal. The client requested the support and attendance of the CIS Information Officer. The client and the Information Officer attended the hearing whereby the appeals officer asked questions to ascertain whether the client had a substantial restriction from gaining employment.

Outcome

The Disability Allowance claim was allowed on appeal post oral hearing and the Invalidity Pension appeal was allowed without an oral hearing. The client's Disability Allowance payment was replaced by Invalidity Pension payment plus back dated monies of €10,500. The client was very relieved and satisfied with the outcome.

Source: North Leinster CIS

Vulnerable client awarded social welfare payment

Issues

The client was referred to the CIS by a domestic violence service. The client was forced to take time off work and had no income because of the violence she experienced at home.

Actions

The CIS agreed to assist the client to make an application for Illness Benefit and Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA). The CIS drafted a covering letter examining the client's situation and submitted this with the applications. A letter was also obtained for the domestic violence charity.

Unfortunately, the client did not have enough PRSI contributions to qualify for Illness Benefit. The designated officer dealing with the SWA claim also required proof of residence to process the claim, but the client did not have any. The designated officer agreed to visit the client at home, but the visit did not occur because the official went on sick leave. The CIS wrote again to the Department explaining the client's vulnerable situation.

Outcome

The client was awarded the SWA payment which was backdated for five weeks. The client was delighted with the outcome and said she would not have any income without the help of the CIS.

Source: Dublin South CIS

Employment

CIS helps client win case against employer who refused payment

Issues

The client worked for an employer for less than two months and was not paid. The employer kept making excuses for not paying, but after weeks of broken promises the client decided to leave and needed help from the CIS to get the money she was owed.

Actions

The CIS contacted the employer on the client's behalf. The employer maintained that the client was on unpaid work experience and had only been promised lunch money and expenses. The client disputed this and claimed a rate of pay had been agreed. As the matter could not be resolved informally, the CIS then submitted a WRC complaint for non-payment of wages and annual leave.

The WRC invited both sides to mediation which was conducted by phone and email. The employer did not change their position, so the case proceeded to adjudication.

The CIS prepared a detailed submission with accompanying documentary evidence and attended an in-person WRC adjudication hearing with the client. The employer did not turn up and had not sent a submission or requested a postponement. The decision was in the client's favour and she was awarded a sum of money for unpaid wages and a compensation award for annual leave. The employer did not appeal the decision to the Labour Court, but they did not make any attempt to pay the client.

The CIS then contacted one of the company directors who said that they were not going to pay. This meant that the client would have to instigate enforcement proceedings through the District Court.

Outcome

Following some research, the CIS managed to contact another company director who agreed to arrange payment for the client.

Source: North Dublin CIS

Client supported to win unfair dismissal case against employer

Issues

The client had been employed for over two years and stated that there were fundamental breaches in their employment. They stated that they had been dismissed and had outstanding annual leave and public holiday entitlements. They wanted to be paid for these outstanding entitlements as well as compensated for what they believed to be an unfair dismissal.

Actions

The CIS Information Officer wrote to the employer outlining the client's issues with the view to resolving the matter informally. The CIS also made a data access request of the employee's records and reasons for dismissal, plus sought the client's PRSI and Revenue records from their employment.

The employer failed to engage with these requests, so the CIS made a complaint to the WRC on the client's behalf under the following grounds: Unfair Dismissal, non-payment of annual leave and public holidays, non-payment of minimum notice, non-issue of terms of employment and non-issue of payment of wages. The CIS Information Officer drafted a submission to the WRC with support from the Advocacy Support Worker.

The CIS attended and represented the client at a WRC adjudication hearing.

Outcome

All complaints were deemed to be well founded by the Adjudication Officer, and the client was awarded a sum of money under all claims brought against the employer. The employer did not pay the award, and so the case was referred to the WRC enforcement unit to pursue the matter into the courts.

Source: North Leinster CIS

Health and Safety and Bullying in the Workplace

Issues

The client was in part-time employment for less than 12 months. One of the more senior staff members there started to bully the client, making belittling comments in front of others and getting her to work outside of her role. The client had made a complaint in relation to this bullying and also in relation to a separate health and safety issue in the workplace. Her complaints were not properly dealt with and ultimately felt she had to resign.

Actions

Because the client had worked for her employer for less than 12 months, the CIS Information Officer advised her that she could not take an unfair dismissal case. After analysing the client's notes and written statement about the events that took place prior to her resignation, the Information Officer noted that it met the criteria for taking an action to the WRC for penalisation under the Health and Safety Act 2005. The Information Officer, with assistance from their Advocacy Support Worker, assisted the client to complete a WRC complaint form in relation to the penalisation she had endured. The Advocacy Support Worker sought legal advice from CIB's contracted expert support provider. Three more complaints were added, one under the Industrial Relations Act, one under the Terms of Employment Act and another complaint under the Health and Safety Act.

Outcome

Immediately, the employer representative began to engage with the client. The client, with the support of the CIS, negotiated a settlement. The client was extremely relieved and stated that the most significant matter was that she finally felt heard by her employer and that prior to submitting her WRC claim the employer had completely ignored her.

Source: South Munster CIS

Migrant worker supported to negotiate compensation from former employer

Issues

The client was a migrant worker who was in full-time employment from April 2022. She was paid an annual salary of €30,000 and worked 40 hours per week. For the first six months of her employment, she worked without a formal contract and did not receive any payslips. The client made numerous requests over several months for a written contract and the employer eventually provided her with one and began issuing her with payslips.

In June 2023, the client was called to a meeting by her employer and was told that her employment was terminated with immediate effect on the grounds that her work was not of the required standard. She then came to the CIS for support with her employment rights.

Actions

The CIS wrote to the employer setting out the background to the case and outlining the client's employment rights. On the instruction of the client, the CIS offered the employer the opportunity to resolve the matter, whilst reserving the right to submit a complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission in the event that a settlement could not be agreed.

The employer accepted that proper procedures had not been followed. The employer also accepted that the client's work was of a good standard and offered to reinstate her and backdate her employment contract to April 2022. However, the client did not wish to return to the employment because all trust had been lost. She said that she wanted compensation for her dismissal and for the employer to agree to resolve her tax and PRSI affairs for the first six months of her employment.

Outcome

The employer agreed to settle the matter and pay the financial compensation and to resolve any tax and PRSI payments for the six months of her employment. The client was delighted with the outcome and found a better job where her new employer had applied for a critical skills employment permit on her behalf.

Source: Dublin South CIS

Housing

Family supported to stay in their home

Issues

The client received an invalid rent review notice which lacked the required 90-days notice period and failed to use the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) rent review notice. The client was also not informed of her right to refer any rent increase dispute to the RTB.

Actions

Upon discussing options, it was decided to contact the landlord's agent to address the issue. During the conversation, the invalidity of the notice was highlighted, stressing the need for a new valid notice to avoid RTB involvement. The landlord's agent acknowledged the error, recognising the client as a reliable tenant. Consequently, they agreed to withdraw the invalid notice and issue a new, valid rent review notice to the client.

Being a lone parent with young children, the client expressed concerns about affording the increased rent. The client was advised that she should approach the HAP section for additional financial support upon receiving the new valid notice.

Outcome

After the correct notice was received, the client contacted the local authority to request a discretionary HAP top-up. This request was granted, alleviating the financial burden for the client and ensuring she could continue to provide a stable home for her family.

Source: North Connacht and Ulster CIS.

Home heating restored for elderly client

Issues

An elderly client came to the CIS because his gas supply had been disconnected and he had no heating. He had no telephone so could not contact the service provider. After discussion with the client, the CIS Information Officer discovered that the disconnection came about as the result of an outstanding amount due on a bill. However, the bill was in the client's brother's name. His brother had passed away and the client did not know what to do.

Actions

The CIS contacted the service provider on the client's behalf. The late brother's account was closed and the outstanding debt was cancelled. The Information Officer also arranged for a new account to be set up in the client's name. However, the re-commissioning of the heating needed more work.

The client needed to provide a registered gas installer's inspection certificate before the gas supply could be re-connected for the heating. The client did not know how he was going to arrange this without a phone, so the CIS linked him in with a service for older people who assisted him with this. The client returned with the required certificate and the CIS contacted the service provider in arranging the re-commissioning of the gas supply.

Outcome

The client's lack of a telephone made this case very difficult. However, his consistent engagement with the service helped as he would regularly call in to seek and to provide updates on progress. Eventually, the gas supply was re-connected, and the client was finally able to heat his home.

Source: North Dublin CIS

From emergency accommodation to home ownership

Issues

The client is a retiree with multiple underlying health conditions and received a valid notice of eviction. They were unsuccessful in finding alternative accommodation and needed CIS support to access Emergency Accommodation Services.

Actions

The CIS prepared the client for Emergency Accommodation (EA) and secured one in the client's locality. However, the location of the EA was not adequate because it was on a country road with no path and the nearest bus stop was 400 yards away. This was a challenge for the client, especially when collecting pension or grocery shopping during the winter nights. The CIS then began to interact via email and telephone with the local county council and Approved Housing Body (AHB) to try and secure housing for the client.

Outcome

Success was achieved when the client was given keys to their own home. Immediately, the CIS set about completing all of the client's secondary Social Welfare entitlements such as living alone increase, household benefits package, fuel allowance and telephone allowance. Because council homes and AHB homes are provided without furniture/fixtures and fittings, the CIS assisted the client to prepare a Social Welfare Exceptional Needs Payment and secured over €4,000.

Source: North Leinster CIS

"I found the person that was dealing with my case was very helpful and outstanding. She couldn't have done anymore. Thanks to her I was very happy with the outcome. Thank you so much."

North Leinster CIS client



Client at risk of homelessness awarded social housing support

Issues

The client was an EU citizen who had been living in Ireland for almost a decade with her dependent children. She was unemployed and her sole income was the One-Parent Family Payment. She could no longer afford her rent and was at risk of homelessness.

She applied to her local authority for social housing support, but they would not process her application until she proved she had 52 weeks of insurable employment in Ireland since her arrival. This wasn't possible as she only had 26 weeks in total.

Actions

In order to be eligible for social housing support, the applicant must have a long-term 'right to reside' in Ireland. In deciding whether an applicant has a 'right to reside' in Ireland, local authorities have been guided by Housing Circular 41/2012. This circular provides that EU citizens can only access social housing support in Ireland if they are 'actively employed' in Ireland, or, if they are not working at that time, if they have been employed for longer than a year.

However, the circular was inconsistent with Irish and EU law under which a person can establish a 'right to reside' in Ireland in a number of ways. The client had a number of grounds on which she could establish a 'right to reside'. Her children were enrolled in an Irish school.

The CIS drafted a detailed submission to the local authority seeking that Circular 41/2012 be waived as it was not consistent with the relevant laws.

The CIS in their submission relied on a very similar case in the Ombudsman's Annual Report of 2022. In that case, the Ombudsman believed that the means by which the woman could be considered as having a right to reside permanently in Ireland were being overlooked by the Council because they were not explicitly recognised in Housing Circular 41/2012.

The circular, published in 2012, had not been updated to meet the provisions set out in SI 548/2015 European Communities (Free Movement of Persons), and did not provide sufficient guidance to local authorities on all of the avenues through which a person may establish a right to reside.

Outcome

Following the CIS's representation, the local authority decided to reassess the client's application for social housing support and allowed her access the social housing list where she could then avail of Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

The client advised the CIS that she had applied for social housing support numerous times in the past but kept being refused as she did not have 52 weeks of employment in Ireland. She stated she almost had given up until she reached out to the CIS.

Source: South Connacht CIS

"Thanks you for everything. I didn't know what do when I was refused Invalidity Pension. Citizens Information explained everything to me. Brilliant job. Thank you again."

North Dublin CIS client



Immigration

Immigration status updated after marriage breakdown

Issues

The client came to the CIS because she was having trouble with changing her immigration status. Her status was based on being the spouse of an Irish national, but her marriage had broken down and therefore she was trying to change to an immigration status in her own right. She had written to the Department of Justice herself, but had received a response indicating they were not satisfied with the evidence proving the subsistence of the marriage relationship in the three years prior to separation. They were requesting utility bills in both names which the client did not have. The client was not sure how to proceed.

Actions

The CIS advised her to collect documentary evidence of any kind in either both her and her husband's joint names or in individual names and bring them to the centre. The Information Officer then examined, sorted and arranged the documents in order of the years and matched the individually named bills at the same address to show that the client had been living at the same address as her husband during the required three years.

During a consultation, the client mentioned that domestic violence has been a contributing factor in the breakdown of the marriage. She had not mentioned this in her previous correspondence with the Department of Justice. The CIS advised her to collect any evidence of services that she had availed of at that time. With all the evidence gathered, the CIS prepared a letter requesting residence for the client in her own right rather than her previous status as the spouse of an Irish national.

Outcome

The client received Stamp 4 permission to remain in her own right. Her immigration status was no longer dependent on her husband.

Source: North Dublin CIS

Visa renewed for international student

Issues

The client, a non-EU citizen, has been living and studying in Ireland for the last number of years with a student residence permit (Stamp 1G). She recently applied to renew her student visa for an additional 12 months in order to take a post graduate course in her chosen field. This was refused by the Department of Justice due to her being on maternity leave and in receipt of maternity benefit.

Actions

The CIS interviewed the client and gathered information on her educational journey in Ireland, current family circumstances, as well as her future intentions in respect of her study. The Information Officer then drafted a letter to the Minister of Justice requesting that an exemption be made in respect of the client and that her student visa be renewed.

Outcome

The client received a letter outlining that her student visa had been renewed for an additional year as an exceptional measure. She has now enrolled in a master's degree programme in her local university.

Source: North Munster CIS



“Thanks so much for your help. I couldn't have managed this on my own – I wouldn't have even known where to start. I can't thank you enough for all you did for me.”

North Munster CIS client

Region	Service Area	New Short-term Advocacy Cases	New Long-term Advocacy Cases
Dublin South	Dublin 12 & 24	104	64
	Dublin South Central	135	82
	Dublin South DLR	25	13
	Dublin South West	242	144
	Total	506	303
North Connacht & Ulster	Cavan & Monaghan	66	55
	Donegal	122	72
	Leitrim	23	22
	Sligo	9	9
	Total	220	158
North Dublin	Blanchardstown / Dublin 15	97	43
	Dublin City Centre	153	94
	Dublin North West	57	47
	Fingal (North County)	96	88
	Northside/DCNB	50	45
	Total	453	317
North Leinster	Kildare	55	35
	Longford	53	21
	Louth	54	40
	Meath	56	46
	Westmeath	56	49
	Total	274	191
North Munster	Clare	87	16
	Limerick	500	49
	Tipperary	232	54
	Waterford	60	40
	Total	879	159
South Connacht	Galway	71	32
	Mayo	83	53
	Roscommon	158	55
	Total	312	140
South Leinster	Carlow & Kilkenny	302	45
	Laois & Offaly	291	133
	Wexford	47	29
	Wicklow	42	19
	Total	682	226
South Munster	Cork City North	47	25
	Cork City South	180	63
	Kerry	38	25
	North & East Cork County	111	39
	West Cork	86	32
	Total	462	184
Total		3788	1678



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