


Citizens Information Services

Supporting Our Clients -
A Year in Review **2024**

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“I met with the Information Officer and found her extremely helpful and calm, explained very clearly and in great detail of what she needed from me, and exactly what she would do. She was polite and understanding, and confident. I had no idea this service was available, but her kindness shown and persistence has **changed my life for the better**. So grateful. Thank you.”

Citizens Information 

A SOURCE YOU CAN TRUST



Delivering
Service and
Support

*Lisa Marnane and Fiona Kearney, Information Officers
from North Munster Citizens Information Service*

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Our services and reach

Citizens Information 

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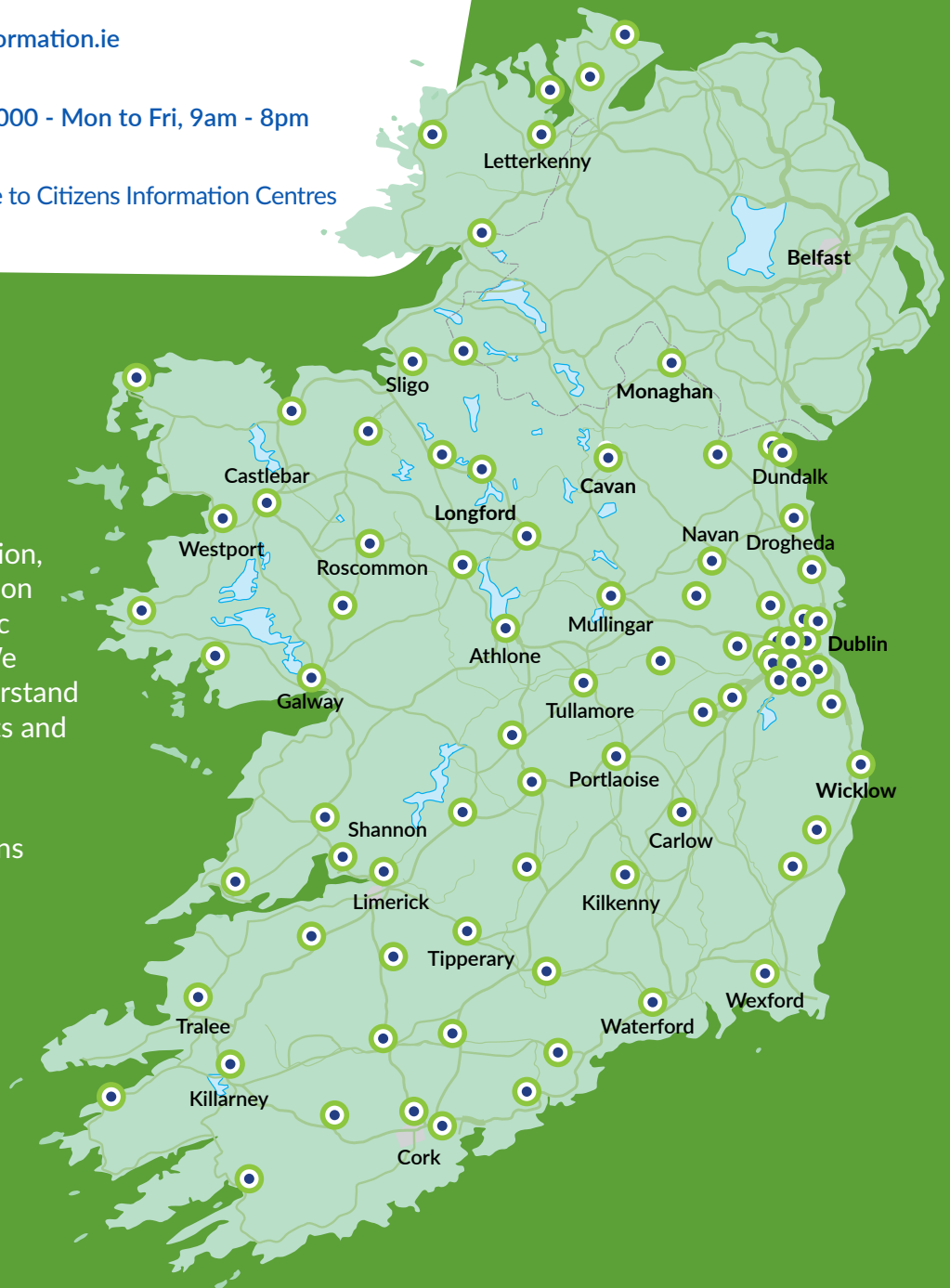
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Drop in
Nationwide to Citizens Information Centres

Citizens Information is a trusted provider of free, impartial, confidential information, advice and advocacy on a wide range of public services in Ireland. We help individuals understand and access their rights and entitlements.

Visit your local Citizens Information Centre (CIC) to get face-to-face support.



Voice of our clients

We asked people about their experience with us in a 2024 customer feedback survey. Over 7,600 people took the survey – their feedback paints a powerful picture of the positive impact we're having:



Positive impact on wellbeing

- 96% felt better after their visit

"10 minutes in experts' hands **brightened my life**. I've got all the answers I was looking for."

"I was so delighted with the service I received, it lifted such a weight off my shoulders and **I could sleep again**."

"I wish I had called you for advice far sooner and **relieved some of the stress** I was feeling. Next time I will call you immediately."

"**Made me feel human again** and gave me encouragement and confidence to keep going."

"After coming home from that office **I'm feeling very confident and optimistic**."



Clear, helpful answers

- 97% said the information was explained well
- 94% said their question was fully answered

"**All my questions were answered** and explained in detail."

"I was feeling vulnerable when I went in to meet a member of the team, but the Information Officer immediately put me at ease. He was most helpful **and explained everything clearly**."

"Everything was **explained fully to me** with courtesy and kindness and help and guidance was given to me throughout my case. I was **informed about every step along the way**. I was happy with the services, and the person who was helping with my case was absolutely brilliant."



Warm, person-centred support

- 99% found staff friendly and welcoming
- 98% felt listened to

“The staff were so **empathetic and extremely helpful**. Always a pleasure to go in there and get advice.”

“I came here in a very bad way of desperation. Both the receptionist and the Information Officer were utterly fantastic, **welcoming, reassuring, respectful** and very competent.”

“I immediately had a good impression because the lady at reception and the Information Officer were very kind and **ready to listen** to my problem with great professionalism and availability.”

“The lady I spoke with was very kind in how she spoke to me and **listened to me** which eased my concerns.”



Safe and trusted

- 98% felt their privacy was respected
- 98% would recommend the service

“**I would use the service again and recommend it** to others.”

“A very good **confidential** service.”



Empowered to Act

A key theme in people’s feedback comments was feeling empowered to take the next step.

“A lady rang me back with the information I requested and was very helpful. After speaking with her **I felt confident enough to make the calls I needed to make.**”

“I did not know how to go about my problem or my rights. **I now have confidence** and have made an appointment with a solicitor. I am 86 years.”

“I found the service a **reassurance before I go to my employer.**”

The survey drew a huge number of comments reflecting high levels of satisfaction and trust in the service. Amongst these positive comments, the service was most frequently described as being helpful, friendly, professional, informative and excellent as shown below:



Voice of our staff

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“One of the most satisfying things about working for the CIS is being able to make real impact in people’s lives. We take time to look at the issues holistically for example I had a young female couple in last year, who presented initially with a refusal for a Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) grant, and our service supported them to successfully appeal this, since then we have assisted them with housing applications, applications for Disability Allowance and later on the happy occasion of their marriage with registration forms. Our service is tailored to the client needs. We offer a safe space where every client is listened to, supported and respected, this ensures the building of trust and ultimately hugely positive outcomes for this couple and all of our clients.”

- Caroline Clarke, Information Officer, Limerick CIC

“

“Having worked as an Information Officer for over 20 years, it is a great feeling when a client leaves the office feeling more hopeful and positive. I get a great sense of fulfilment knowing that people can go on to secure their entitlements, whether they can navigate the process on their own or need my help”.

- Nora Richardson, Information Officer, Nenagh & Roscrea CIC



Cecilia Byrne, Information Officer, Thurles CIC

Top Client Queries in 2024



Social Welfare

45% (346,054) of our queries and 77% of our advocacy work are about social welfare.

Top 5 social welfare payments people needed support with:

1. State Pension (Contributory)
2. Disability Allowance
3. Carer's Allowance
4. Fuel Allowance
5. Household Benefits Package



Housing

11% of queries (85,148) were about housing. More than half (51%) of these queries were **about local authorities and social housing**.



Health

8% (62,496) of queries were about health. The majority (62%) of these queries were about **Medical Cards**, an 8% increase compared to the previous year.



Money and Tax

6% (44,702) of queries were about money and tax, including **income tax credits and reliefs**, income tax, and needing help using Revenue Online Services.



Employment

6% (44,326) of queries were about employment. The majority (59%) of these queries were about **employment rights and conditions**. There was a 24% increase in queries about finding employment and 9% increase in queries about self-employment.

How we helped

Citizens Information Service supported 395,017 people with **767,168 queries** in 2024. Each query is categorised into one of three types of support:



Information

We provided information about people's rights and entitlements in 289,490 queries (37.7%). In 2024, medical cards were the most common area that people sought information about.



Advice and Assistance

We provided tailored advice and assistance to people in 473,317 queries (61.7%). This work included helping people explore their options (62%), understand eligibility rules (30%), and complete application forms (11%) to access the supports they need.



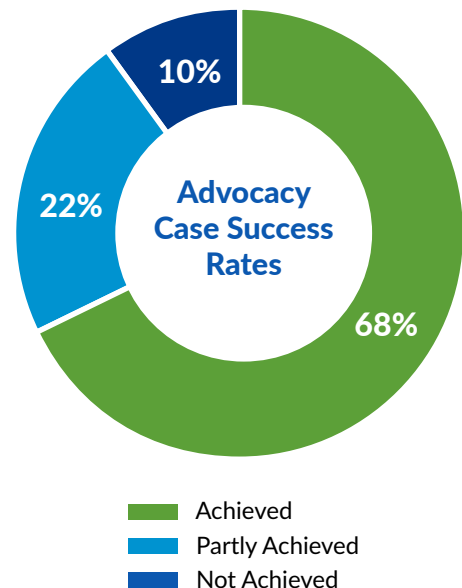
Advocacy

An advocacy service is provided when someone needs extra support for a complex ongoing issue. We provided an advocacy service in 4,361 queries, of which 1,517 required long-term advocacy support over an average of 8 months per case. While this makes up less than 1% of all queries dealt with in 2024, we spent **20,310 hours** on this work plus the 1,061 existing advocacy cases open at the start of the year.

Of the 1,506 advocacy cases closed in 2024, CIS helped secure successful outcomes in 68% of cases, with a further 22% achieving partial success, highlighting the effectiveness of our support in resolving complex issues.

Our interventions included:

- 686 social welfare appeals submitted
- 139 direct negotiations with employers, landlords or local authorities
- 113 oral hearings attended:
 - > 50 hearings at the Social Welfare Appeals Office
 - > 50 hearings at the Workplace Relations Commission
 - > 7 adjudication hearings at the Residential Tenancies Board
 - > 3 tribunal hearings at the Residential Tenancies Board
 - > 2 Equal Status adjudication hearing at the Workplace Relations Commission
 - > 1 hearing at the Labour Court



At the heart of the community

Strengthening communities through engagement

In 2024, Citizens Information Services participated in targeted initiatives to strengthen community outreach and collaboration, including the following:

Community Engagement and Targeted Supports

North Leinster Citizens Information Service delivered a school programme reaching secondary school students and generating nearly 1,000 queries on rights and entitlements for school leavers. The service also provided specialised clinics and support for individuals seeking international protection and beneficiaries of temporary protection. In collaboration with Teagasc, North Leinster CIS hosted a webinar for farmers covering pensions, the Fair Deal scheme, and budget updates. Additionally, the service contributed to retirement preparation by presenting to outgoing members of the Defence Forces.

Education Outreach

North Dublin Citizens Information Service delivered a presentation to students participating in the Trinity College Access Programme, supporting awareness of their rights and entitlements as they transition into third-level education.

Traveller and migrant Community Engagement

North Munster Citizens Information Service welcomed Traveller Community Health Workers to its service, fostering stronger relationships and raising awareness of CIS supports within the Traveller community. The service supported 541 people in the Ukrainian community through a weekly clinic.

Mental Health Resource Development

South Munster Citizens Information Service collaborated with the Fermoy Community Network to develop the Staying Well Mental Health booklet. This comprehensive resource outlines the wide range of mental health supports available in the North Cork area, enhancing local access to vital information.

Disability and Carer Support

Dublin South Citizens Information Service delivered a keynote address at a workshop during the Muscular Dystrophy Ireland conference held in Croke Park. The presentation focused on entitlements for carers and people with disabilities, the implications of the 2025 budget, and the Work and Access Programme.



Cathy White: Acting Development Manager, Dublin South Citizens Information Service delivering the keynote address at the Muscular Dystrophy Ireland conference in Croke Park

Literacy and Lifelong Learning

South Leinster Citizens Information Service worked with a coalition of community, voluntary, and statutory organisations to support the Adult Literacy for Life strategy. As part of this initiative, the service promotes literacy-friendly practices in the workplace and actively signposts individuals to local literacy supports, contributing to lifelong learning in the region.

Roscommon Dementia Alliance

South Connacht Citizens Information Service actively participated in the Roscommon Dementia Alliance throughout the year, contributing to monthly meetings at the Roscommon Memory Café. As part of this collaboration, the service provided tailored information and advice to people living with dementia, their families, and carers.

Public Awareness Event on Making a Will

North Connacht & Ulster Citizens Information Service hosted a public event titled "Making a Will" at the Landmark Hotel in Carrick-On-Shannon. Guest speaker Anne O'Carroll addressed attendees to raise awareness about the importance of making a will and understanding inheritance matters.



Dolores Tiernan, Daniel O'Reilly, Ann Kinsella, Sinead Conefrey, Catherine Gill from North Connacht and Uster CIS hosting the Making a Will event with Anne O'Carroll Director Cascade training consultancy.

Volunteers in Citizens Information

Since the 1970s, volunteers have been central to Citizens Information Centres. In 2024, 195 volunteers supported CICs nationwide, contributing up to 7 hours per week across roles like client support, administration, and reception.

Each CIS company also benefits from voluntary board members, who bring expertise in governance, finance, and community development.

This volunteer effort keeps the service rooted in communities, promotes active citizenship, and offers personal fulfilment for those involved. Here's what people shared about their experience volunteering with the CIS:

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“The team was excellent, a fabulous group to work with, from management down to volunteers; everyone was lovely. Seeing and interacting with the team really fostered a sense of community, which I feel can be rare in some working environments”.

(Volunteer in Citizens Information)

“I think the volunteer program is an excellent chance for all individuals to improve their skillsets and gain valuable experience”.

(Volunteer in Citizens Information)



“I love my time volunteering in Citizens information. It has a very positive impact on my life. The clients are very appreciative of the assistance they receive and there is enormous satisfaction in knowing you have helped someone. The staff in the centre are lovely, very helpful, kind and friendly. One of my life’s great experiences is volunteering in citizens information”.

Volunteer with Citizens Information

Creating access to specialist information

Citizens Information is a generalist information service and while our staff and volunteers are well trained across a range of topics we also facilitate access to information specialists through our service. We arranged 225 telephone consultations with Free legal Advice Service (FLAC) in 2024.

Dublin City Centre and Castlebar Citizens Information Centres also hosted Threshold outreach clinics in 2024 where 141 people received independent advice and advocacy about renting privately.

Cross Border Information Project

Beginning in April 2020, North Connacht & Ulster Citizens Information Service has delivered a dedicated cross-border support initiative, funded by the Centre for Cross-Border Co-operation and supported by the Reconciliation Fund. In 2024, the project continued to provide vital assistance to individuals navigating residency and employment across jurisdictions, while also expanding its outreach through clinics along the Donegal-Derry/Tyrone corridor. A full-time Information Officer provided expert guidance to 1,004 clients, addressing 1,594 cross-border issues. A total of 129 social policy issues were identified and documented to inform national policy discussions. The service actively participated in Border People seminars, supporting sector-wide knowledge sharing. Value and tangible benefits throughout 2024 included:

- **Better Outcomes for Clients:** People received clear, accurate advice tailored to their cross-border circumstances.
- **Reduced Stress:** Support helped clients manage complex transitions with confidence.
- **Stronger Services:** Advisors gained access to cross-border expertise, improving service quality.
- **Policy Influence:** Evidence from frontline queries contributed to national conversations on entitlements and service gaps.
- **Improved Access:** Rural and digitally excluded individuals were reached through tailored, in-person support.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** New relationships created a more integrated support network across jurisdictions.

Supporting national strategies

In 2024, CIS played a key role in supporting and advancing national strategies by making policy initiatives accessible, actionable and inclusive to clients.

Digital Ireland Framework

The Digital Help Service

CIS piloted a Digital Help Service in 2024 to support the Digital Ireland framework and address digital exclusion. Launched across 14 Citizens Information Centres in October, the pilot ran for five months and supported 1,303 individuals in accessing key online government platforms such as MyRevenue, MyWelfare, NDLS, and MyGovID. This initiative contributed to a 41% increase in queries about helping clients with online access compared with 2023.

The pilot found that the main barriers to accessing online services were lack of digital literacy (55%), language challenges (31%), and limited IT access (15%). Notably, 78% of clients were under 66, showing widespread need across age groups.

The pilot confirmed the value of tailored digital support and highlighted the importance of embedding such services within CIS to reduce exclusion and improve access. Following its success, the service will be rolled out nationally in 2025 across the Citizens Information Centres, helping Ireland move toward its 2030 digital targets of 80% of eligible citizens using MyGovID and 90% of applicable public services being online.

Key impacts in 2024:

- Enabled greater digital inclusion for vulnerable groups.
- Increased engagement with e-government services.
- Strengthened CIS's role in supporting digital transformation.

The Digital Help Service received overwhelmingly positive feedback from users:

- 97% of clients either strongly agreed or agreed that their online needs were met through the service.
- Clients reported increased confidence, reduced stress, and greater independence in accessing online government services

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“Without the CIC, I wouldn't be able to access any of the online services.”

Client with no IT access

“I have always found the service to be very helpful as I have limited English; now I can use the online service knowing I will receive help.”

Client with a language barrier

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“I now know how to complete this online application, and in the future, I will be able to do it myself.”

Client supported with MyWelfare application

CIS Remote Service

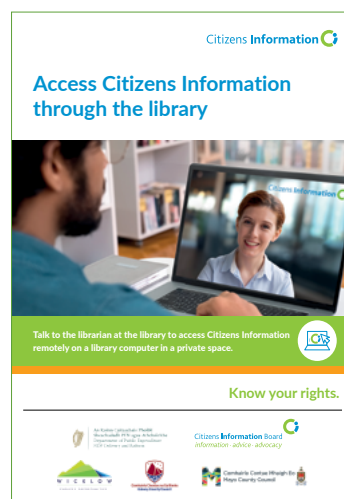
In 2024, Citizens Information Centres in Achill (Co. Mayo), Wicklow Town (Co. Wicklow), and Carraroe (Co. Galway) piloted remote clinics hosted in local libraries. This innovative model enabled clients to meet Information Officers via video link rather than in person. Appointments were scheduled in advance, with library staff supporting users to get online and access their consultation.

Key impacts in 2024:

- The pilot improved accessibility in rural and Gaeltacht areas.
- Promoted digital inclusion by assisting users with low digital literacy.
- Strengthened community collaboration and partnerships between CICs and libraries.

Supported by the Public Sector Innovation Fund, aligning with national digital transformation goals. This pilot demonstrates a scalable and inclusive model for extending CIC services through technology and community-based collaboration.

In 2024 three remote or virtual Citizens Information Clinics commenced in libraries in Achill Co. Mayo, Wicklow town, Wicklow town and Carraroe Co. Galway.



Irish Prison Service (IPS) Reintegration Strategy

CIS worked in close collaboration with the Irish Prison Service (IPS) to deliver confidential, independent, and nonjudgmental information, advice, and advocacy to individuals and people in prison. A number of information materials were developed and made available to people in prison and their families. These materials include a series of videos which inform on a range of issues from renewing a driving licence while in prison, making an application for social housing while in prison and going back to education or returning to work after release. These videos, which are being shown in every prison in Ireland, support the re-integration of prisoners to society following their release.

The IPS facilitates secure access for CIS staff to operate within prison settings, enabling meaningful engagement with prisoners.

Key impacts in 2024:

- 754 individuals supported through in-reach services
- 3,778 queries handled across a range of topics
- 165 advocacy cases undertaken
- Assistance provided with social welfare benefits and entitlements
- Focused support to prevent homelessness upon release
- Reintegration guidance for post-release planning
- Liaison with Prison Education Centres to support learning and development
- Contribution to pre-release and rehabilitation courses

Services were delivered in Portlaoise Prison, Midlands Prison, Cork Prison, Cloverhill, Castlerea Prison, Arbour Hill Prison, and Limerick Prison. There are plans to expand in-reach services in Wheatfield Prison, Dochas Centre (female prison), and Mountjoy Prison.

Housing for All

CIS helps people navigate housing services, including eligibility criteria and application processes. It collaborates with local authorities to keep housing information current and relevant and provides guidance on tenants' rights, landlord obligations, and dispute resolution

Key impacts in 2024:

- CIS responded to 85,148 housing-related queries to help people understand and applying for housing services, representing 11% of all queries received. More than half of these (51%) focused on local authority and social housing, highlighting the demand for support in navigating public housing systems.
- By simplifying complex processes, CIS empowered individuals to navigate housing systems more confidently and independently.
- CIS promoted awareness of rights and responsibilities, supporting the reduction of disputes and fostering more stable tenancies.

CIS provided timely support to address homelessness or the escalation of housing problems.

Advocacy case studies

Support with Unfair Dismissal

Issue

The client came to the CIS seeking assistance in relation to their employment situation. They had worked for their employer for many years, but the employment relationship had broken down. The employer was trying to make changes to the client's terms and conditions including a change of location and a reduction in hours. The client turned to the Citizens Information Service for help as they were ready to resign.

Actions

The CIS provided support and advised the client to follow the company's grievance procedure. However, the client returned to the CIS after an argument with their employer. The CIS advised the client to continue with the grievance procedure. The client then returned to the CIS advising that the employer had locked them out of the employment premises. The CIS recognised the case as a potential unfair dismissal.

At this point the CIS directly contacted the employer and set up a meeting with the employer and the client with the CIS in attendance. Both sides agreed that the employment relationship had broken down and was beyond repair.

Outcome

As a result of the CIS intervention, a termination agreement was negotiated which included a €12,000 settlement. This provided financial security and closure for the client.

Source: North Dublin CIS

Carer's Allowance Overpayment Overturned

Issue

A woman contacted the CIS very distressed after the loss of her mother. She was an only child and her mother was her only family. After her bereavement, she was referred to mental health services for support. A social worker from this service accompanied the client to the CIS after learning that the client was still receiving Carer's Allowance, even though her caring role had ended.

Actions

The CIS immediately contacted the Carer's Allowance section of the Department of Social Protection to report the death and stop the Carer's Allowance payment. The CIS explained to the client that she would likely be assessed with an overpayment because the payment should have stopped after 12 weeks of her mother's passing.

The CIS also helped the client apply for Disability Allowance and Supplementary Welfare Allowance to help support her financially. Following the CIS's call to the Carer's Allowance section, the client received a letter advising of an overpayment of €4,480. This covered the period after her mother passed away, after subtracting the 12-week payment she was still entitled to.

The CIS then put together a detailed submission on behalf of the client to appeal this overpayment. The submission argued that, had the client notified Carer's Allowance of her mother's passing earlier and the payment stopped after 12 weeks, she would have been entitled to another social welfare payment instead.

Outcome

The Social Welfare Appeals Office allowed the appeal. The Carer's Allowance overpayment was offset against her Disability Allowance and she was not required to repay the balance sum. Thanks to the CIS intervention, she was supported to maintain financial stability during a difficult time.

Source: South Connacht CIS

Disability Allowance Awarded for Rare Condition

Issue:

The client has a rare and life-threatening health condition that severely limits daily activities. The client had applied for Disability Allowance, but was refused due to failing the medical eligibility test. The client came to the CIS for help after receiving the negative decision letter.

Actions:

The CIS worked closely with the client and their family to prepare a submission for review of the decision. The CIS gathered evidence from the client's specialist consultant and outlined the daily routines and support required to manage the condition, including ongoing medication and heart monitoring, and showed how the client's health risks would make typical employment unsafe. The submission also highlighted the extensive safety measures and care plan that was in place, demonstrating how the client participates in daily life under close supervision.

Outcome:

Following a successful review, the client was placed on Disability Allowance from date of application and received arrears of €8,120.

Source: South Leinster CIS

Tenant-in-Situ Scheme Prevents Family Homelessness

Issue

The client was living in rented accommodation with her children when she received a notice of termination from her landlord, who was selling the property. She was unable to find alternative accommodation and was at serious risk of homelessness. She came to the CIS for help to stay in her home and to avoid becoming homeless.

Actions

The CIS explained the tenant-in-situ scheme, which allows local authorities to buy a rental property and continue renting it to the existing tenant. The CIS contacted the landlord, who was open to the idea but said they had previously struggled to progress a sale with the local authority.

The situation was complicated because the client was on the housing list in one local authority area but renting in another. Both authorities claimed the other was responsible. The CIS contacted the Housing Agency for guidance and they helped clarify the correct process with both councils.

The CIS kept in close contact with the landlord and both local authorities, stressing the urgency of the situation. When delays continued, the CIS followed up to ensure the necessary property file was transferred between councils. Once this happened, the second local authority was able to make an offer to the landlord.

Outcome

Due to the CISs intervention, the landlord accepted the offer and the client's family were able to remain permanently in their home.

Source: Dublin South CIS

Domiciliary Care Allowance Secured

Issue

The client was refused Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) for her child, who has a serious health condition.

After meeting with the client and reviewing the specialist reports provided, the CIS believed that there was a strong case to appeal the decision.

Actions

The CIS submitted an initial notice of appeal and requested the client's file under Freedom of Information. This showed that the section of the form completed by the GP was limited, but the specialist reports showed the child's care needs met the criteria for DCA and also highlighted mental health concerns which were not previously discussed.

The CIS met with the client again to gather more medical evidence and prepared a detailed submission. Unfortunately, the appeal was not successful.

The CIS then explored the option of a Section 317 review. They discussed with the client why mental health hadn't been included in the original application. The client explained they had focused on the child's physical condition and were struggling to accept the mental health diagnosis. The CIS advised them to obtain more information the child's physical and mental conditions.

The client did get this information, and the CIS prepared a fresh submission for review.

Outcome

Thanks to the advocacy provided by the CIS, the review was successful, and the client was awarded Domiciliary Care Allowance with arrears of almost €11,000.

Source: North Dublin CIS

Landlord's Discrimination and Termination Successful Challenged

Issue

The client lived with his family in a two-bed apartment. After raising concerns about the poor living conditions, he received a notice of termination from the landlord. He came to the CIS for help to stay in their home and to improve their living conditions.

Actions

The CIS supported the client in writing to the landlord about the needed repairs. In the response, the landlord made discriminatory remarks.

The CIS submitted a complaint with supporting documents to the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB). They also helped the client notify the landlord of an intended complaint to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) under the Equal Status Act. The landlord denied the client's claim of discrimination, so the complaint was then submitted to the WRC on behalf of the client.

The CIS represented the client at both the RTB and WRC hearings. The landlord attended both hearings and was represented by a solicitor at the WRC hearing.

Outcome

The RTB ruled in the client's favour, declaring the termination notice invalid and finding that the landlord had breached his obligations to carry out necessary repairs to the dwelling. The client was awarded €3,500 in compensation.

The WRC Adjudication Officer found that the client was discriminated against on the grounds of race, contrary to the Equal Status Act. The landlord was ordered to pay €10,000 in compensation.

Thanks to the representative advocacy provided by the CIS, the client and his family were supported to remain in their home and their rights were upheld.

Source: Dublin South CIS

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The staff were so **empathetic and extremely helpful**.
Always a pleasure to go in there and get advice.”



Mary Ryan, Volunteer Information Provider, Thurles CIC

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