

The logo for TúsLA, featuring the word 'TúsLA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The 'ú' has a dot above it, and the 'L' is stylized with a horizontal bar that extends to the right.

TúsLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Anonymised Casebook on Learning from Feedback and Complaints in 2020



Welcome to the 2020 edition of Tusla's Anonymised Casebook on Learning from Feedback and Complaints which is also the first edition! Tusla are pleased to be progressing our aim of increasing our learning from complaints data in what was a challenging year for everyone.

Tusla monitors and draws on complaints data to inform service improvement. Tusla have implemented key performance indicators to ensure the time we take to resolve complaints improves and that we aim to resolve complaints locally as much as possible in as short a time as possible.

This casebook is a part of Tusla's commitment to expand on the learning available from complaints and feedback and to strengthen the sharing of that learning. Unique anonymised examples are used that reflect themes and issues which arise in the course of daily service provision in Tusla and which inform quality and service improvement.

Tusla's commitment to our values and behaviours of Trust, Respect, Kindness and Empowerment is reflected in the way we manage feedback and complaints

Our Values & Behaviours



Trust



Respect



Kindness



Empowerment

We also aim to support our staff to learn from any mistakes and support a culture of resolution, not blame, wherever possible, to promote a learning culture in Tusla.

**Resolution
not Blame**

This case book presents a sample of 14 cases of complaint or feedback in a wide range of categories from across Tusla's services nationally. Presenting cases here offers Tusla staff greater awareness of the types of complaints and feedback Tusla receives about service delivery and also provides public insight into how complaints are managed and resolved by Tusla.

This casebook will be widely circulated to staff within Tusla to promote and embed reflection and an Agency learning culture, in addition to the individual learnings which occurred locally in each of these cases.

The Quality Assurance Directorate which compiled this casebook recognises and appreciates the contributions made by service users who take the time to raise complaints and provide feedback to Tusla. We also recognise the contributions of staff who, at all times, aim for local resolution of complaints and always appreciate feedback from service users on what's working well too. Next year, we hope to increase the size of the casebook to include more case examples and to continue to improve on Tusla's use of data from complaints and feedback.

1. **Category of Complaint:** *Delayed response/decision.*
Complaint Status: *Upheld.*

Background

Foster carers had a child placed with them who needed medical attention. The child's medical card was not provided to the foster carers when the child was initially placed with them and they incurred medical expenses as a result. Further to this, there was a delay in the processing of the medical card.

Response

An application for a medical card was made and the carers received reimbursement of their expenses.

Outcome and Learning

The Area Manager apologised for the delay in application for the child's medical card which was accepted by the foster carers.

Social workers were reminded to factor in time to follow up on pre-placement assessments in order to minimise the risk of re-occurrence.

2. Category of Complaint: *Outcome of Assessment/Lack of Consultation*
Complaint Status: *Partially Upheld*

Background

Foster carers complained about the disproportionate Safety Plan implemented by social work team on the return of foster children to their care following an investigation into unfounded allegations that had been made against them.

Response

On reflection, the social work team leader and social worker agreed that the Safety Plan was disproportionate and did not reflect an unfounded outcome to the allegation.

Outcome and Learning

The Safety Plan was adjusted and an apology issued to the foster carers. This incident was anonymised and used as a case study in Signs of Safety* training with the children in care team.

*Signs of Safety is the national approach to child protection used by Tusla.

3. Category of Complaint: *Lack of Consultation*
Complaint Status: *Partially Upheld*

Background

A foster carer complained that the agreed plan of informing her foster child of their move to a long-term fostering placement was not adhered to. The foster parent was also dissatisfied because she had not been included in informing the child.

Response

The fostering link worker acknowledged that there was confusion about who would inform the child about the move to a new placement. The child in care social worker had thought that the fostering link worker would speak to the foster carer about the move and explain how the child would be informed.

Outcome and Learning

An apology was made to the foster carer for the upset caused. A SOP (standard operating procedure) was created in the Tusla area outlining in more detail the specific process for informing a child in care when their placement is ending – clearly identifying the person who will inform both the child and foster carer of this move.

4. **Category of Complaint:** *Breach of Procedure/unfair treatment*
Complaint Status: *Upheld*

Background to complaint

The complainant is a provider of an early years service, who made a complaint that during the course of an inspection, flash photography was used to take photographs of a sleep room. The room was darkened and a child who was sleeping in the room was awoken by the flash.

Response

The complaints officer found that the guidance for early years inspections did not specify how to take photographs of a darkened sleep room while it is in use.

Outcome and Learning

This guidance will now be reviewed by the head of inspection and assessment, and specific guidance on this issue will be provided to all inspection staff of the Children's Services Regulation directorate.

5. **Category of Complaint:** *Telephone Unavailability*
Complaint Status: *Resolved Locally*

Background

A young person living in a residential care service made several complaints about communication from their Tusla social worker. They were frustrated that the social worker did not return their calls immediately and instead of returning a call directly to their personal mobile, phoned the residential unit instead.

Response

The social work team leader attempted to locally resolve the complaint by offering to meet the young person to discuss their complaint issues. At the meeting, the team leader explained that it may not be possible for a social worker to answer their phone or return calls immediately due to the nature of social work. The team leader also explained that it is standard practice for a social worker to contact the residential unit prior to phoning a young person to check if there are any immediate issues/concerns or to verify what the young person requires assistance with.

Outcome and Learning

The young person was satisfied that the explanations provided by the team leader were reasonable and thanked them for coming out to the residential unit for the meeting. The complaint was closed as locally resolved.

6. Category of Complaint: *Poor Communication*
Complaint Status: *Upheld*

Background

Tusla aftercare services received a complaint from a young person who was unhappy that a medical diagnosis, that they were not aware of, was shared in a meeting where they were present. The young person queried why Tusla staff knew the diagnosis before they did.

Response

The complaint officer found that the information regarding the complainant's diagnosis should have been shared with the young person prior to this meeting.

Outcome and Learning

A recommendation was made for the relevant team to put a procedure in place to verify that sensitive information provided by external agencies has been shared with the young person.

Tusla staff offered to source the report from the relevant external service and to go through it with the young person to ensure that they fully understood the diagnosis and to sign-post them to appropriate supports.

7. Category of Complaint: *Insufficient Service*
Complaint Status: *Informal Resolution*

Background

The service experience and feedback team (SEF) received a letter from a young person who wanted to complain about their experience of adoption with Tusla. The young

person expressed frustration at the length of time the adoption process took, felt unsupported by Tusla and couldn't understand why the views they had expressed to their social worker were not taken into consideration by other relevant public bodies. The young person stated that they were complaining to ensure that there would be some learning for the agency and to help other young people in a similar position.

Response

A senior manager offered to meet with the young person and adoptive parents in person to discuss their complaint issues. The senior manager reassured the young person that their experience was of value to the Agency and if still dissatisfied after the meeting, the area manager advised that they would then arrange for a complaint investigation.

Outcome and Learning

At their meeting, the young person discussed the complaint issues in more detail which included frequent changes in social worker and the experience of the process.

The senior manager apologised for the changes in social workers and offered specific support. Tusla is currently developing guidance on 'permanency planning' for children in care and the issues raised were passed on to the national working group responsible for the guidance.

The young person accepted the apology and the support offered. They indicated that they were satisfied their feedback to the agency will help inform the permanency planning guidance so that other young people may have a more positive experience.

8. Feedback Category: *Positive Feedback*

Background

Positive feedback was received from a community partner for a presentation on the use of Meitheal approach by a Tusla staff team.

**Meitheal is a voluntary case coordination process for families who require multi-agency support and who do not meet the threshold for social work intervention under Children First.*

Response

The prevention, partnership and family support (PPFS) team were thanked for delivering an informative and relevant briefing on Meitheal* for an external agency's team meeting

Outcome and Learning

Those who attended reported feeling more confident about taking on a lead role in organizing a Meitheal. This reinforced the value of the approach and the importance of raising awareness about it with Tusla's community partners

9. Feedback Category: Positive Feedback

Background

Positive feedback was provided by a Guardian Ad Litem** (GAL) who was supporting a child on a family reunification plan in relation to the team's professional collaboration with partners and pro-active approach to supporting the family.

***Guardian Ad Litem's are independent court appointed professionals who ensure the voice of the child is represented*

Response

The positive feedback was forwarded to the team noting the GAL view that their approach was collaborative proactive and supportive with all concerned.

Outcome and Learning

The impact of collaborative and proactive work practices in the challenging domain of court ordered intervention is reinforced and further supports the explicitly collaborative Signs of Safety‡ model used by Tusla.

‡Signs of Safety is the national approach to child protection used by Tusla.

10. Feedback Category: *Positive Feedback*

Background

Positive feedback was received from a private residential care unit for a young person's child in care (CIC) social worker. Specifically, the positive feedback noted the CIC social worker had effectively cultivated and established a positive working relationship with both the private residential care staff and the young person.

Response

The residential care service was thanked for the feedback and the positive feedback was brought to the attention of the social worker concerned.

Outcome and Learning

The feedback from the residential care unit reported that the availability of the child in care social worker for meetings when needed, despite a busy workload, was experienced as particularly valuable and reflected a high standard of care to the service user and a high standard of professionalism to the service provider.

11. Category of feedback: *Positive Feedback*

Background:

Grandparent of a family receiving a service from Tusla where children were in care complimented the social work team on their hard work and commitment by 'going over and above their duties', 'listening to the family', 'good communication with the family and wanting what was best for the family especially the children'. The intervention and engagement lead to family reunification.

Response

The positive feedback was conveyed to the relevant Tusla child protection social work and social care team involved.

Outcome and Learning

The feedback reinforces the importance of strong communication and network supports in achieving positive engagement and outcomes for children and young people.

12. Category of feedback: *Positive Feedback*

Background

Foster parent gave feedback on their experience of a fostering placement.

“[social worker name] was very good, I had no doubt the social worker had my back at all times, if she said she would do something she did it, she was great to deal with and lovely to talk to and she always put me at ease”.

Response

The feedback was provided to the line manager and to the social worker concerned.

Outcome and Learning

Foster carers are a valued resource in Tusla and it is always helpful to hear how Foster carers are experiencing the supports offered by Tusla and for staff to hear what is important to Foster carers.

13. Category of feedback: *Positive Feedback*

Background

A Foster care association contacted Tusla to advise that it had received feedback from multiple foster families about the support Tusla provided to foster families during the COVID 19 lock downs noting that this support was appreciated.

Response

This feedback was shared with the relevant staff team for their awareness.

Outcome and Learning

It was noted that many of the positive feedbacks received in 2020 from foster carers remarked that the advice and support social workers provided, in relation to contact with families of origin during lockdown, was particularly appreciated. The

importance of providing additional advice at times of unprecedented change was underscored as important to supporting foster carers.

14. Category of feedback: Positive Feedback

Background

A mum wrote to Tusla about their experiences of Meitheal* expressing their appreciation for it.

“I was so happy with the Meitheal yesterday. I just went away from it thinking how great it is that all of the focus is on our child for once. It’s the first time in a long time her Dad and I have sat down and spoken about her. Thank you”

**Meitheal is a voluntary case coordination process for families who require multi-agency support and who do not meet the threshold for social work intervention under Children First.*

Response

The feedback was acknowledged and was passed on to the relevant staff team in Tusla’s Prevention, Partnership and Family Support services (PPFS)

Outcome and Learning

The feedback was received as further endorsement of the usefulness of Meitheal approach used by Tusla to support families.

Tusla hopes that you have found the 2020, example complaints and feedback, and their associated resolution and learning, informative.

This casebook was brought to you by the Service Experience and Feedback team who can be contacted at tellus@tusla.ie

All policy and procedure documents associated with the management of complaints and feedback in Tusla can be found on the Tusla website www.tusla.ie