

The logo for TúsLA, featuring the word 'TúsLA' in a stylized font. 'Tús' is in green and 'LA' is in blue. The letters are bold and sans-serif.

TúsLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

A large, stylized graphic of a ship's wheel, rendered in shades of green and blue, centered on the page. The wheel has eight spokes and a circular hub. The text 'COMPLEX NEEDS IN Aftercare' is centered within the dark blue hub of the wheel.

COMPLEX NEEDS IN Aftercare

THIS IS A SUPPORTING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR AFTERCARE, WHICH SHOULD BE READ
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 'NATIONAL AFTERCARE POLICY FOR ALTERNATIVE CARE'

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This document should be read in conjunction with ‘The National Aftercare Policy, 2017’.

People with complex needs are understood as having multiple issues in their lives which can include mental health and/or addictions, developmental issues involvement in the criminal justice system, finding and maintaining housing.

1.0 Introduction

Young people who have lived in alternative care may require some additional supports that need to be considered as part of aftercare planning. It is essential that these needs are identified as part of the referral process to the aftercare services and the social worker is proactively engaging in identifying services to support these young people in their transition to adulthood. Early identification and referral to the appropriate specialist services is key to comprehensive care planning and ensures that these young people and young adults are supported and prepared for their transition to adulthood. Engagement with key adult services for these young people prior to their 18th birthday is a key role for the social worker as part of the care planning process.

The role of the aftercare steering committees is essential in planning and supporting these young people and the multi-agency approach used on these committees should support meeting the needs of these young people.

2.0 Mission Statement

Tusla – Child and Family Agency is committed to delivering and implementing an aftercare service for young people and young adults which is responsive, inclusive and relevant to each young person's circumstances. This will provide an equitable, holistic and integrated service to young people and young adults to support their changing needs and their pathway to adulthood.

3.0 Procedure for social work and aftercare staff

“Working in partnership is an underpinning principle in the provision of aftercare services.”

The key role for aftercare workers and social work staff in addressing and planning for young people and young adults with additional needs is early assessment, early intervention and robust planning processes. Establishing links with the other agencies and making referrals to the steering committees at the earliest point possible will make for the delivery of planned services.

The role of the aftercare services varies depending on the assessed and identified needs of young people and young adults.

4.0 The role of the aftercare service

For young adults who are referred to an adult service as their primary service provider and remain in accredited training or full time education.

In cases whereby the assessment indicates that the young adult’s primary service is provided through another State department, for example the HSE residential disability services, the role of the aftercare service is primarily an advocacy and financial support function. Financial support in these cases refers to the aftercare allowance. This support remains in place until 21 years or until 23 years (where applicable).

The aftercare service has a statutory responsibility to undertake an assessment of need and develop an aftercare plan with the key stakeholders. The aftercare service has a role in reviewing the aftercare plan on an annual basis until the case closure.

For young adults who are referred to an adult service as their primary service provider and are not in accredited training or full time education.

In cases whereby the assessment indicates that the young adult's primary service is provided through another State department, for example the HSE residential disability services, the role of the aftercare service is primarily an advocacy function.

The aftercare service has a statutory responsibility to undertake an assessment of need and develop an aftercare plan with the key stakeholders. The aftercare service has a role in reviewing the aftercare plan on an annual basis until the case closure.

For young adults who remain with their former carers or live independently, however require specialist services

In these cases the primary service is provided through Tusla and all supports that the young person/young adult is entitled too is coordinated by Tusla.

Identifying the young people and young adults with that require special consideration is a challenging task given the uniqueness of every child and young adult's situation, however in an effort to demonstrate some examples of whereby special consideration should be considered the following areas will provide some reflection for staff working in aftercare. This is not an exhaustive list.

5.0 Young adults with moderate, severe and profound learning disability and physical and sensory disability

Young adults with disabilities may well face additional challenges than other young adults who are being cared for or leaving care, and may also have needs specifically related to impairment. It is essential to ensure that these needs are met when preparing these young people for leaving care and subsequently, providing aftercare. At the same time, care must be taken to ensure that these young adults do not fail to achieve their full potential as a result of under expectation on the part of those caring for them.

Co-operation between the various agencies involved in providing services for young people with intellectual, physical or sensory disabilities is crucial.

Please refer to:

‘Joint Protocol for Interagency Collaboration between the Health Service Executive and Tusla – Child and Family Agency to Promote the Best Interests of Children and Families, 2017’.

6.0 Young adults with disability

There are many young people in the care of the State who present as young adults with borderline, a mild general learning disability or young adults with dual diagnosis.

It is vital that these young people are identified in care at an early stage so that early preparation and planning takes place and that the assessment is comprehensive. It is imperative that an assessment is multidisciplinary to ensure that appropriate personnel are involved and supports and resources are identified and in place. The assessment may include input from psychology services, disability services, education/training services, mental health, housing, community welfare etc. The assessment must inform the development of the aftercare plan. For young people under 18 years the child’s social worker must refer to the aftercare interagency steering committee.

The role of the aftercare worker is to:

- With young adults over the age of 18 years the aftercare must refer into the aftercare interagency committee with the young adult’s consent.
- Coordinate and monitor the aftercare plan.
- Support the young adult engage with the plan and access specialist services.
- Advocate for service provision
- Identify and highlight gaps and blocks for service provision.

Please refer to:

‘Informed Consent Aftercare Guidance, 2017’.

‘Aftercare Interagency Steering Committee Guidance 2017.

‘Joint Protocol for Interagency Collaboration between the Health Service Executive and Tusla – Child and Family Agency to Promote the Best Interests of Children and Families, 2017’.

7.0 Substance misuse

There is a recognition that some young adults who have had care experiences may engage in substance misuse. It is the role of the aftercare to:

Support the young adult to refer into specialist service/GP or make representation on their behalf with their consent.

Refer the young adult with their consent to the steering committee or alert the services representative if the young adult is already known to the steering committee with their consent.

Provide ongoing support to attend services and seek help.

For young adults who do not present with substance misuse issues but these issues are noted by the aftercare worker. The aftercare worker in this instance discusses their concerns and engages in open discussion with the young adult.

Support the young adult to refer into specialist service/GP or make representation on their behalf with their consent.

Refer the young adult with their consent to the steering committee or alert the services representative if the young adult is already known to the steering committee with their consent.

Provide ongoing support to attend services.

If the young adults continuously refuses to engage with and avail of support from aftercare and appropriate addiction services this must be explicitly recorded on their aftercare file.

Please refer to 'The National Informed Consent Policy, 2017'.

8.0 Mental health and wellbeing

It is very important that positive mental health and wellbeing is promoted for young people and young adults in aftercare. In supporting young adults in mental health and well-being the role of the aftercare service is:

To proactively support young adults engage in activities that will positively promote their sense of well-being and development and connection and integration within their community.

Support the young adult to refer into specialist service/GP or make representation on their behalf with their consent.

Refer the young adult with their consent to the steering committee or alert the services represented if the young adult is already known to the steering committee with their consent.

Provide ongoing support to attend services and seek help.

The aftercare plan should include a clear and comprehensive strategy for the management and support of a young person/young adult with mental health difficulties, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in supporting them in aftercare.

9.0 Parent and child

Some young adults leaving care are parents or become parents. In this regard additional services may be offered to support them as parents and this includes a variety of local coordinated community supports such as 'Meitheal', 'Parenting Plus', 'Teen Parenting Supporting Programmes'. Care leavers who are parents will be provided with aftercare support. The aftercare service is compliant with the requirements of 'The National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011'.

10.0 Separated children seeking asylum

Unaccompanied minors are accepted into the State and directed to Tusla's child protection services in accordance with the provisions of Section 8(5) of 'The Refugee Act'. Tusla is obliged to provide care and protection to unaccompanied minors under the provisions of 'The Child Care Act' until they reach their 18th birthday. On reaching 18 years these young adults without some form of status become adult asylum seekers and are subject to the full provisions and conditions of 'The Refugee Act' and the administrative arrangements for asylum seekers as put in place by the State.

Once the young person is known to the aftercare service every effort will be made to support the social work department to work with the young person in securing their status. Post 18 years the aftercare service will continue to provide this support. On discharge from State care at 18 years (or the end of the current school year), young adults in the asylum process are entitled to reside in direct provision accommodation should they wish to access basics state supports. This will include such assistance as medical cards, accommodation, room and board etc. Asylum seekers in Ireland are not entitled to work nor receive full social welfare benefits. This is Government policy. Young adults who leave care and do not avail of direct provision therefore exclude themselves from these basic supports.

Tusla encourages all young adults who have left care and are within the asylum system to transfer to direct provision.

These young people/young adults are entitled to apply for an aftercare service in the same manner as all young people in care. The criteria and eligibility as outlined in the National Aftercare Policy, 2017 equally applies as does the process in relation to an Assessment of Need and Aftercare Plan. The main difference is that those who are adult asylum seekers are not entitled to financial support from Tusla; this is provided through direct provision.

Tusla will advocate and actively engage with other State Departments in meeting the needs of this group of young people and young adults.

11.0 Accommodation needs

Tusla is committed to ensuring that all young adults leaving care have appropriate and suitable accommodation.

As young adults with care experience are not a homogeneous group they may require additional supports in relation to accommodation.

Tusla will actively engage and advocate with partners in housing and other State Departments in meeting the needs of this group of young adults.

The role of the aftercare service in housing is to:

- Identify housing needs as part of the assessment of need and aftercare planning in collaboration with other key stakeholders.
- When a need is identified it is the role of the aftercare worker to support the young adult secure, and sustain accommodation.
- If the risk of homelessness arises to work preventively with the local housing authority.
- If homelessness does arise these young adults are prioritised on the aftercare interagency steering committees and homeless action teams for speedy response and resolution.
- To support and explore options for accommodation with foster carers for those young adults who remain in placement.

Please refer to ‘The Aftercare Interagency Steering Committee Guidance 2017’.

12.0 References

‘Joint Protocol for Inter-Agency Collaboration between the Health Service Executive and the Child and Family Agency to promote the best interests of Children and Families, 2017’.

‘Young People Leaving State Care Joint Working Protocol between Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and Housing Authorities, 2014’.

