

TUJSLA

**NATIONAL CHILDREN'S
CHARTER**

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Back to the Beginning

- TUSLA's document *Toward the Development of a Participation Strategy for Children and Young People: National Guidance and Local Implementation* (2015) identifies the development of a National Children's Charter as a priority action.

The Purpose of the Charter

- Customer charters: set out the standard of service customers, including children, can expect to receive from any service.
- TUSLA's National Children's Charter should benefit children by providing greater clarity on the quality of services they may expect, how these will be delivered and the principles underpinning this.
- It benefits staff delivering such services by clearly stating the principles to be adhered to in the delivery of services to children and their families.

Participants

- TUSLA identified four groups, one in each region, to participate in the consultations.
- Cork Life Centre, Cork City; Moutnmellick Development Association, Co. Laois; TUSLA Child and Family Centre Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan; Ballybane Family Support Services, Galway City.
- Over 50 children aged between 10 and 18 years, all service users, included a number of children and young people from traditionally seldom heard groups.

Participation Process

- All of the children and their parents/guardians were provided with information about the development of the Children's Charter and the consultation.
- Consent and assent was sought.
- Participation and Partnership Officers provided additional information to the children and young people.
- We went to meet the children in the projects in which they were familiar.

First Consultation Groups

Presentation to the groups on:

- Who TUSLA are
- What a Charter is
- Purpose of the Children's Charter
- Children's Rights
- Examples of other Children's Charters

First Consultation Groups

- Video and storyboard: Chick and Dan



Questions to Guide the Discussions

- Facilitated sessions with the children and young people in small groups.
 - If you were Chick or Dan, how would you like the TUSLA worker to treat you?
 - What could the TUSLA worker do to make you feel better?
 - What could the TUSLA worker do to make you feel safe or looked after?
 - What could the TUSLA worker do that would make you feel sad or angry?
 - What kinds of things would you want to ask the TUSLA worker?

Themes

Theme	Number of comments
GIVE US INFORMATION	42
BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH US	38
TREAT US WITH RESPECT	34
HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE	30
HAVE A CHILD FOCUSSED APPROACH	26
THINK ABOUT OUR FAMILY	24
GET US PRACTICAL HELP	22

Theme	Number of comments
LISTEN TO US	19
RESPECT OUR PRIVACY	13
KEEP US SAFE	10
HELP US GET OTHER SUPPORTS	7
BE SUITABLE FOR THE JOB	7
BE REALISTIC/HONEST	6
THINK ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS	3

Feedback Sessions

- Undertaken in January of this year with each of the groups
- Majority of the original participants came back
- Were provided with information about the purpose of the feedback sessions:
 - To check the analysis of their comments: did we understand them correctly
 - To get comments on the first draft of the Charter
 - To get ideas on how the Charter should look and how it should be made available

Result of the Feedback Sessions

- Comments moved under themes but mostly because they had more than one meaning
- Broadly happy with the draft Charter but considered it too 'wordy', too long and that two versions needed – one for younger children, one for older children
- Lots of ideas about how the Charter should look - use of colours, text, images
- And how it should be available – online, posters, audio version, braille version, in different languages etc.

Re-Ordered Themes

Theme	Number of comments	Theme	Number of comments
TREAT US WITH RESPECT	56	GET US PRACTICAL HELP	23
LISTEN TO US	40	RESPECT OUR PRIVACY	19
GIVE US INFORMATION	40	KEEP US SAFE	19
BUILD A RELATIONSHIP WITH US	35	HELP US GET OTHER SUPPORTS	14
HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE	34	BE SUITABLE FOR THE JOB	16
HAVE A CHILD FOCUSSED APPROACH	33	BE REALISTIC/HONEST	19
THINK ABOUT OUR FAMILY	26	THINK ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS	9

Examples of Comments Under Themes

- **Treat us with respect:** *Not to laugh at us; Not to be made fun of; I would like them not to judge; don't assume you know everything about the young person.*
- **Listen to us:** *don't put words in your mouth; ask what you wanted; use appropriate language; ask how you are feeling; be patient.*
- **Give us information:** *Tell you what's going to happen; why are they here; what do you do for Tusla and what way do they work?; Keep words simple – no big words.*

Examples of Comments Under Themes

- **Build a relationship with us:** *Show you care; have a chat, get to know you/one another; gain trust over time; involve hobbies, e.g. sport, as part of the plan.*
- **Have a positive attitude:** *have the crack; don't be judgemental; to be appropriate – not frowning; be positive; Have bad body language/bad facial expressions.*
- **Have child focussed approach:** *Don't treat us just like another case; the young person gets to choose where they meet; taking too long to get through issues; only talk to adults.*

Participation of Children

- Essential to the development of the Charter
- Methodology drew on the Lundy Model of Participation:
 - Space
 - Voice
 - Audience
 - Influence

The Participation Model in Practice

- **Space:** meeting the children and young people in their own spaces where they were comfortable, with people they already knew. Giving enough information for them to decide if they wanted to participate or not.
- **Voice:** given additional information at the sessions to help them form a view, facilitated by adults they already knew and were comfortable with, direct recording of their views as they expressed them.

The Participation Model in Practice

- **Audience:** views recorded, listened to, fed back to the children and young people for verification, evidenced where their views were located in the Charter.
- **Influence:** views incorporated into the Charter, every comment provided to senior staff in TUSLA, ideas on the presentation and availability of the Charter brought to TUSLA Communications Unit and incorporated.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHARTER

This Charter says how all children will be treated by all Tusla staff. These are the key messages from children who took part in writing this Charter.

As CHILDREN we want Tusla workers to:

Involve us in making plans and decisions.

Treat us, and our family with respect.

Get us help and information from other services.

Talk to us in private and where we are comfortable.

Help keep us safe and away from harm.

Think about the good and bad things in our life and our future.

Be positive, friendly, and caring.

Think about our mental health.

Give our family help and advice to care for us.

Do activities we enjoy with us.

Only share our information with others when they have to.

Listen and talk to us.

Give us information we can understand.

Give us time to trust each other.

Tusla workers will:

- Be suitable for their job.
- Respect children and put their **best interests first**.
- Listen to and involve children in plans and decisions.
- Give clear information about who they are, what they do, what will happen and when things will happen.
- Understand children and their situation.
- Build positive, caring and trusting relationships with children.
- Meet children where they are comfortable and have privacy.
- Help families to care for children.
- Respect children's privacy and confidentiality as far as possible.
- Get children other services when needed.
- Be realistic and honest about what Tusla can do.

TUSLA

NATIONAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHARTER

This Charter says how all young people will be treated by all Tusla staff. These are the key messages from young people who took part in writing this Charter.

As YOUNG PEOPLE we want Tusla workers to:



Involve us in making plans and decisions.

Treat us, and our family with respect.

Think about the good and bad things in our life and our future.

Talk to us in private and where we are comfortable.

Think about our mental health.

Help keep us safe and away from harm.

Be positive, friendly, and caring.

Do activities we enjoy with us.

Get us help and information from other services.

Give us information we can understand.

Give us time to trust each other.

Give our family help and advice to care for us.

Only share our information with others when they have to.

Listen and talk to us.

Tusla workers will:

- Be suitable for their job.
- Respect young people and put their best interests first.
- Listen to and involve young people in plans and decisions.
- Give clear information about who they are, what they do, what will happen and when things will happen.

- Understand young people and their situation.
- Build positive, caring and trusting relationships with young people.
- Meet young people where they are comfortable and have privacy.
- Help families to care for young people.

- Respect young people's privacy and confidentiality as far as possible.
- Get young people other services when needed.
- Be realistic and honest about what Tusla can do.

Next Steps

- Formal presentation of the Charter to TUSLA today
- A poster version of the Charter circulated to all TUSLA offices and services
- TUSLA staff will also receive a brief document setting out the process used in the development of the Charter and its purpose
- Additional ways of making the Charter available is being developed.

Final Words

- The Charter applies to all TUSLA staff irrespective of their particular role. TUSLA recognises that its staff already operate on the principles that the Charter contains: the Charter will act as a reminder of these principles and the approaches they require.
- Moreover, it provides a clear statement to young service users, their parents and guardians of what young people can expect from any staff member of Tusla.
- This is very much a ***children's charter***. It reflects the young people's views of how they want to be treated and what they want TUSLA to commit to doing to ensure this happens.
- This is a first attempt at this Charter and it will be reviewed and changed as necessary.