

TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Child Protection Conference

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Information Leaflet for Professionals



Under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, everyone who works with children has a responsibility to keep them safe.

Where serious concerns of ongoing risk of significant harm from abuse by the parents are identified in Tusla's assessment of a child protection concern, a Child Protection Conference (CPC) is convened. This leaflet is to help you understand the purpose of a CPC and your role in participating in the conference. This leaflet should be read in conjunction with Tusla's Information for Professionals which gives an overview of the Signs of Safety National Approach to social work practice with children and their families.

The Purpose of a Child Protection Conference

A CPC is an inter-agency and family meeting which takes place when there is a concern that a child is at ongoing risk of significant harm from abuse, including neglect. These cases are always considered high priority by the social work team. It is facilitated and chaired by a Principal Social Worker independent of the case management of the children.



This leaflet is to help you understand the purpose of a CPC

The purpose of the CPC is:

- To determine if the child is at ongoing risk of significant harm
- To maximise involvement of parents, the child and people who have a natural connection to the family to create an effective safety plan
- To communicate to the family and network what professionals are worried about and what Tusla will need to see to be satisfied that the children will be safe with the family
- To get the parents' and network's ideas and solutions
- To list the child on the Child Protection Notification System if it is determined that a child is at ongoing risk of significant harm of abuse caused by their parents

The Child Protection Notification System (CPNS)

The CPNS is a secure database that contains a national record of all children who have reached the threshold of being at ongoing risk of significant harm and where there are ongoing child protection concerns. The list is there to help a small group of relevant professionals make decisions about the safety of a child. Access to the CPNS is strictly confined to Tusla social workers, members of An Garda Síochána, hospital, medical, nursing staff, and out-of-hours General Practitioners. When it is decided that the child is no longer at ongoing risk of significant harm, their record will be changed from active to inactive. On their 18th birthday, their record will be deleted from the CPNS.



Eligible Participants

If you are requested to attend a Child Protection Conference, you will receive an invitation. The invitation contains information about a report you will be asked to prepare and send to the Chairperson in advance. You will receive the contact details of the Chairperson and can contact them if you have questions

In addition to the child, the child's parent/s and staff from Tusla Social Work service, the following categories are considered eligible for invitation to a CPC:

- Parents
- Any children who are over 12 years of age can come to some or all of the CPC
- People who are important to the child and parents, and who can help to keep them safe - we call this group the 'Safety Network'
- A support person for parents or the child
- Family, and Safety Network members other than parent/s - their presence at the CPC is deemed essential in regard to formulating a child protection safety plan if required
- A note-taker
- A Tusla Social Worker and their Manager

- CPC Chairperson
- A professional who has direct contact with the child and or parent/s or a representative from the particular service, or agency involved
- A professional who is no longer involved but whose presence at the CPC is deemed essential to ensure an informed outcome
- Teachers, Public Health Nurses (where children are aged 5 and under or in receipt of the PHN service), General Practitioners and medical consultants
- Members of An Garda Síochána directly involved with the case (it is not necessary to routinely invite Gardaí to all CPCs)
- Home Helps, Community Welfare Officers, Family Support Practitioners, Classroom Assistants and other Support Staff, if required.
- Students in training (with the consent of family members)

Mandated Persons

The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on certain people, many of whom are professionals, to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla-Child and Family Agency.

These mandated persons must also assist Tusla, on request, in its assessment of child protection concerns about children who have been the subject of a mandated report.

The CPC Process

The Chairperson leads attendees through the Signs of Safety assessment framework using a whiteboard or flipchart by asking questions relating to the three columns of the Signs of Safety Map to all the CPC participants:

- What is working well?
- What are you worried about?
- What needs to happen?

This approach facilitates information sharing from various perspectives. Everyone is asked to individually scale their judgement and rationale regarding the child's current safety on a scale from '0' – '10' using the Safety Scaling Question. Everyone is encouraged to use clear, simple, and behaviourally specific language.

This ensures transparency and that all decisions made are understood by parents and families. Rules and arrangements are created to ensure that a child will be kept safe even when danger or a risk is present. These are built on and reviewed

at network meetings after the conference with the family.

All attendees will hear the Danger Statement, Safety Goal and Scaling Question which is specific to the child. These will have been shared with the family previously.

The child's view is central to the CPC. The Social Worker prior to the conference will support the child to clearly express their views and they will have been shared with the parents or carers. Their views will also be shared at the CPC if the child does not wish to attend, or it is not in their best interests to do so.

Your Role as a Professional at the Child Protection Conference

As a professional participating in a CPC, you are expected to:

- Attend and participate as required at CPCs, review CPCs
- Share your perspective and prepare a report for the CPC where requested
- Share your opinion about whether the child should be listed as active on The Child Protection Notification System.
- Commit to implement those parts of the Child Protection Safety Plan that relate to you.

It is expected that you will share your conference report with the parents/ carers prior to the meeting unless to do so will be harmful to the child.

If you have any queries or issues, it may be helpful to discuss them with the Chairperson prior to the CPC. If you have a particular concern that may arise from the attendance of the child or any family or network member, please discuss these in advance with the CPC Chairperson.

Review Child Protection Conference:

This CPC Child Protection Safety Plan will be reviewed within 6 months. At this review, it will be decided if the CPC Safety Plan is working. Everyone present will use the safety scales to rate this. The professionals present will decide whether they think that the child is still at on-going risk of significant harm from abuse by the parents.

If they decide that the child is no longer at on-going risk of significant harm, the child's name will be made inactive on CPNS (we explain the CPNS on page 3). We will continue to work with the family and Safety Network to check that the Safety Plan is working to keep the child safe and to agree what still needs to happen before the child's case can close to Tusla.

Further information is available from 'Tusla's National Approach to Practice in Child Protection and Welfare A Briefing for external partners' is available on www.tusla.ie.

Complaints Process

If you have a complaint, we encourage you to make direct contact with the staff member concerned to resolve the matter. A leaflet is available on www.tusla.ie to explain the process further.

Your personal data will be processed in compliance with all relevant data protection legislation and other legal requirements to which Tusla is obliged to adhere. Full details of Tusla's Privacy Policy (setting out how we will use your personal data as well as information regarding your right as a data subject) are available in the About Us (Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Administrative Access) section of www.tusla.ie

The logo for Tusla, featuring the word 'TUSLA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter 'i' is stylized with a dot above it. The background of the entire page is a teal color with large, overlapping, curved shapes in varying shades of teal.

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