

# National Childcare Scheme Tusla Sponsor Referrals

## Parent Information



### What is a sponsor referral?

The National Childcare Scheme (NCS) makes special arrangements for vulnerable children and families to be referred by certain sponsor bodies so they can receive free childcare from participating providers.

The full cost of an agreed amount of childcare hours is paid for families who are referred to the Scheme by a sponsor body.

There are 5 sponsor bodies who can make referrals. Each sponsor body has specific criteria for making a referral.

**Tusla (Child and Family Agency)** is one of 5 sponsor bodies that can make referrals.

Each sponsor body has specific criteria for making a referral. Details on the criteria for Tusla to make a sponsor referral are set out below.

### Who can Tusla refer?

Tusla may refer children from birth to 17 years to the NCS where there is an identified need for childcare on child welfare, child protection or family support grounds.

Children referred to the Scheme by Tusla must be in one of the following categories:

- Children who are aged from birth to 17 years, and who are in need of additional care and protection as part of the provision of childcare and family support services by the CFA
- Who are deemed by the CFA to require childcare services in order to promote their welfare
- Children whose families are receiving support under Meitheal
- Children known to the child protection system (level 2 or level 3)
- Children in care.

### What does this mean for me as a parent?

The person working with you from Tusla will fill out a referral form for you. This form will tell you the number of hours of childcare that you can use per week.

The maximum hours available per week are 45. You can use these hours with a participating, Tusla registered childcare service.

The referral form will also tell you how long the referral will last. In general, this will be for one year. However, it might be for a shorter period if Tusla decides this meets your needs. It may be renewed following a review after one year.

Tusla will give you a copy of the referral form. You should check the personal information on the referral form to make sure that it is correct.

### How is my referral made?

Tusla will send a copy of the referral form to the Scheme on your behalf. The Scheme will then give Tusla a '**CHICK**' for you to use to claim these hours.



Your **CHICK**  
is your unique  
**Childcare Identification**  
**Code Key.**

Your service provider will  
use this code to unlock  
your NCS hour



### **What do I need to do?**

If Tusla have not already recommended one, you will need to find a participating, Tusla registered childcare service that can provide the hours needed. Over 3,000 service providers have signed up to deliver the Scheme. You will then need to bring their CHICK to the service provider.

The service provider will use your CHICK to register your child on the NCS IT system. The free childcare place is then available to use and will be paid for under the Scheme.

If you do not already know of a service you should contact your local City or County Childcare Committee, who can provide information on registered childcare providers in the local area. Contact details for all City and County Childcare Committees can be found at [www.myccc.ie](http://www.myccc.ie).

Participating services are also listed on the NCS website at [www.ncs.gov.ie](http://www.ncs.gov.ie).

### **How much will I have to pay?**

The hours recommended for you by the Sponsor will be paid under the Scheme. You will not need to pay for any of these hours.

### **How does the provider get paid?**

All payments will go directly to the childcare service. If your child is not attending for the hours on the referral form, the sponsor body will be notified and payments may be affected.

### **What happens when the referral ends?**

A referral may cover 12 months, or less in some circumstances. If there is a need for the sponsorship to continue, Tusla will send in a new referral for you and repeat the above steps.

If the referral doesn't need to be renewed, you can apply for a non-sponsored childcare subsidy on the NCS website. (This can be as much as €229.50 per child per week)

In either case, you should be contacted by Tusla **20 days** before the end of the referral to ensure there is no gap in financial support under the National Childcare Scheme.

### **Where can I get more information?**

The NCS Sponsors Team can be contacted by phone at **01 906 8535** from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday or by email at [sponsors@ncs.gov.ie](mailto:sponsors@ncs.gov.ie).

For general information on the Scheme visit [www.ncs.gov.ie](http://www.ncs.gov.ie) or call the NCS Parent Support Centre on **01 906 8530** from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

