

National Childcare Scheme Tusla Sponsor Referrals

Staff 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.

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

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 the 5 sponsor bodies. Details on the relevant criteria for Tusla 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.

Who makes the referral?

The Tusla staff member working with the family will decide if the family meet the criteria for a sponsored referral and will fill out a referral form. The referral form must then be signed and verified by the Senior Manager Prevention Partnership and Family Support (or their delegate) as the Designated Contact before it is sent to the NCS Administrator (Pobal).

What should Tusla staff do where they know a child that may meet the criteria for a sponsor referral?

Please inform the family of the availability of sponsored childcare, their eligibility and the process of how to apply through your organisation.

What ages are referred?

Children from birth up to 17 years of age may be referred by Tusla.

How much childcare is available?

Tusla will determine how much childcare is needed based on the family's circumstances and will put this on the referral form. The maximum amount of funded childcare available is 45 hours per week.

How long will the referral last?

In general the referral will last one year, but it may be for a shorter period based on the individual needs of the family as determined by Tusla. If deemed necessary, it can be renewed after one year.

How is the referral made?

The Senior Manager Prevention Partnership and Family Support (or their delegate) as the Designated Contact should send a copy of the referral form to the NCS Administrator on behalf of the family at the following address:

NCS, P.O. Box 13105, South Side Delivery Office, Cork City, Co. Cork.

The NCS Administrator will then send the sponsor body a unique code called a “**CHICK**”, which the family must use to claim their childcare hours.

What does the family need to do?

The family will need to find a participating, Tusla registered childcare service that can provide the hours needed. Over 3,000 providers have signed up to deliver the Scheme. They will then need to bring their CHICK to the service provider.

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

If the family do not already know of a service they should contact their 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**.

Participating services are also listed on the NCS website at **www.ncs.gov.ie**.

How much will the family have to pay?

The full cost of the hours the sponsor has recommended will be paid under the Scheme directly to the childcare provider – the family 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 a 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 the sponsorship is to continue Tusla will need to send in a new referral for the family and repeat the above steps.

If the referral is not going to be renewed, the family 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, the family should be contacted **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**.

For general information on the Scheme visit **www.ncs.gov.ie** or call the NCS Parent Support Centre on **01 9068530** from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

For the details of your local contact in the Senior Manager Prevention Partnership and Family Support (or their delegate) please contact **ppfs.admin@tusla.ie**