

TUSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Tusla's National Children's and Young People's Charters

Information
for Staff





Colleagues,

The development of Tusla's Children's and Young People's Charters is another step in our drive to ensure that children and young people can exercise a proportionate degree of power, control, choice and responsibility over decisions affecting their lives.

We need to listen to and act on what children and young people are telling us, to ensure the decisions we make are in the best interests of children and young people.

The Children's and Young People's Charters aim to:

- Give children/young people and their families' greater clarity about the quality of services they can expect from all Tusla staff members, how Tusla staff will interact with them to find solutions, and the principles that underpin this work.
- Provide all staff with a clear guide and reminder of what is important to children and young people with whom we work.

The principles in the Children and Young People's Charters are relevant for all staff, regardless of your role. I have no doubt that the principles in these charters are already being used, however, these charters will act as a useful reminder of the standards that are expected when engaging with children and young people on a day to day basis.

I'm delighted to see this impressive project come to fruition after extensive work by Tusla staff and Dr Carmel Corrigan. The charters are invaluable and I hope all staff will use these charters to guide practice.

I look forward to seeing the charters displayed and implemented across the country, I know they will take pride of place in my own office.

Yours sincerely,



Fred McBride

Chief Executive
Tusla - Child and Family Agency

Introduction

In 1992 Ireland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention contains 54 social, economic and cultural rights that the State had committed to strive to uphold. In addition to the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 2012 Ireland voted to strengthen the rights of the child within its own Constitution. In summary, these new Constitutional rights provide that the State will:

- Recognise children in their own right.
- Treat all children equally.
- Protect children from abuse and neglect.
- Ensure that young people's views are heard and their best interests considered in Court proceedings.
- Support families.

In 2015, Tusla's *'Toward the Development of a Participation Strategy for Children and Young People: National Guidance and Local Implementation'* identified the development of a national Children's Charter as a priority action.

How the Children and Young People's Charters were developed

Tusla is strongly committed to the principle and practice of children's participation. Reflecting this, the Children's and Young People's Charters were developed in consultation with children and young people.

Following a review of children's charters from Ireland and elsewhere, consultations were held with four Tusla sponsored groups, one from each Tusla region. Approximately 50 children and young people aged between 9 and 17 years took part in these consultations.

The charters were developed using the 'Lundy Model of Participation'¹ with children and young people. This has four key elements that were applied in the following ways:

SPACE: We met the children and young people in their own project groups where they were comfortable, with people they already knew. We gave them as much information as they needed to decide if they wanted to participate.

VOICE: The children and young people were given additional information at the sessions to help them form a view. The groups were facilitated by adults they already knew and were comfortable with. We recorded their views as they expressed them, in the language they used.

AUDIENCE: Children and young people's views were recorded and listened to. We checked back with them to make sure that we understood their views correctly. Then we showed them where their views fitted into the charters.

INFLUENCE: The views of the children and young people were incorporated into the charters. They were consulted on the look for the charter's (e.g. children and young people were asked what colours and design they would like to see in the charters), and how it should be made available.

¹ Lundy, L. (2007) 'Voice is not enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child', *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 927-42.

Each group of children and young people was given information about Tusla, the purpose of the charters, children and young people’s rights and examples of other charters. They were then shown a Tusla video, and a storyboard which was developed specifically for children and young people. These highlighted some of the issues that children and young people may experience in their families, how Tusla might get involved, and how Tusla staff might work with the family in these situations. Each group was then asked to work with a facilitator in smaller groups to consider what they might want to include in Tusla’s Children’s and Young People’s Charters.

To help them with this, they were asked to consider five questions:

- 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?

Over 281 responses were received by children and young people. Following an analysis of these responses, we identified 14 key themes. These themes were used to draft the charters.

A selection of themes and comments made by children and young people

<p>Treat us with respect:</p> <p>‘Be calm and don’t laugh’; ‘Don’t be judgemental’; ‘No dirty looks’.</p>	<p>Build a relationship with us:</p> <p>‘Ask how you are feeling’; ‘Gain trust over time’; ‘Have a chat, get to know you/one another’; ‘Play with you’.</p>
<p>Have a positive attitude:</p> <p>‘Make you feel welcome and that you belong’; ‘Don’t hold the past against people’; ‘Be positive’.</p>	<p>Be realistic and honest:</p> <p>‘Don’t make false promises’; ‘Know what you can and can’t deliver’; ‘Explain what’s going to happen during the process’.</p>

The draft charters were brought back to each of the four groups of children and young people. The purpose of the second round of consultations was:

- To check our analysis of their comments e.g. did we understand them correctly?
- To seek feedback on the first draft of the charters e.g. did it say what they wanted it to? Did it say this in the right way? Was it easy to understand?
- To get ideas on how the charters should look and how they should be made available.

The feedback from these second consultations informed a number of changes in the content of the charters and provided valuable ideas on both how the Children's and Young People's Charters should look, and how they should be made available.

These charters are children's and young people's charters. They reflect the views of children and young people - something that the Agency strives to achieve in all its work.

Comments from children and young people



Acknowledgements

Tusla would like to express its sincere thanks to the children and young people, as well as the staff of the following projects who helped to organise, facilitate and took part in the development of the Children's and Young People's Charters:

- Castleblaney Child Well-Being Centre, Monaghan;
- Ballybane Family Support Services, Galway;
- Mountmellick Development Association, Laois;
- The Cork Life Centre, Cork.

Documents
for reproduction



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.

Do activities we enjoy with us.

Only share our information with others when they have to.

Give our family help and advice to care for us.

Give us information we can understand.

Listen and talk to us.

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.

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.



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.

TUSLA

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.

Do activities we enjoy with us.

Only share our information with others when they have to.

Give our family help and advice to care for us.

Give us information we can understand.

Listen and talk to us.

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
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

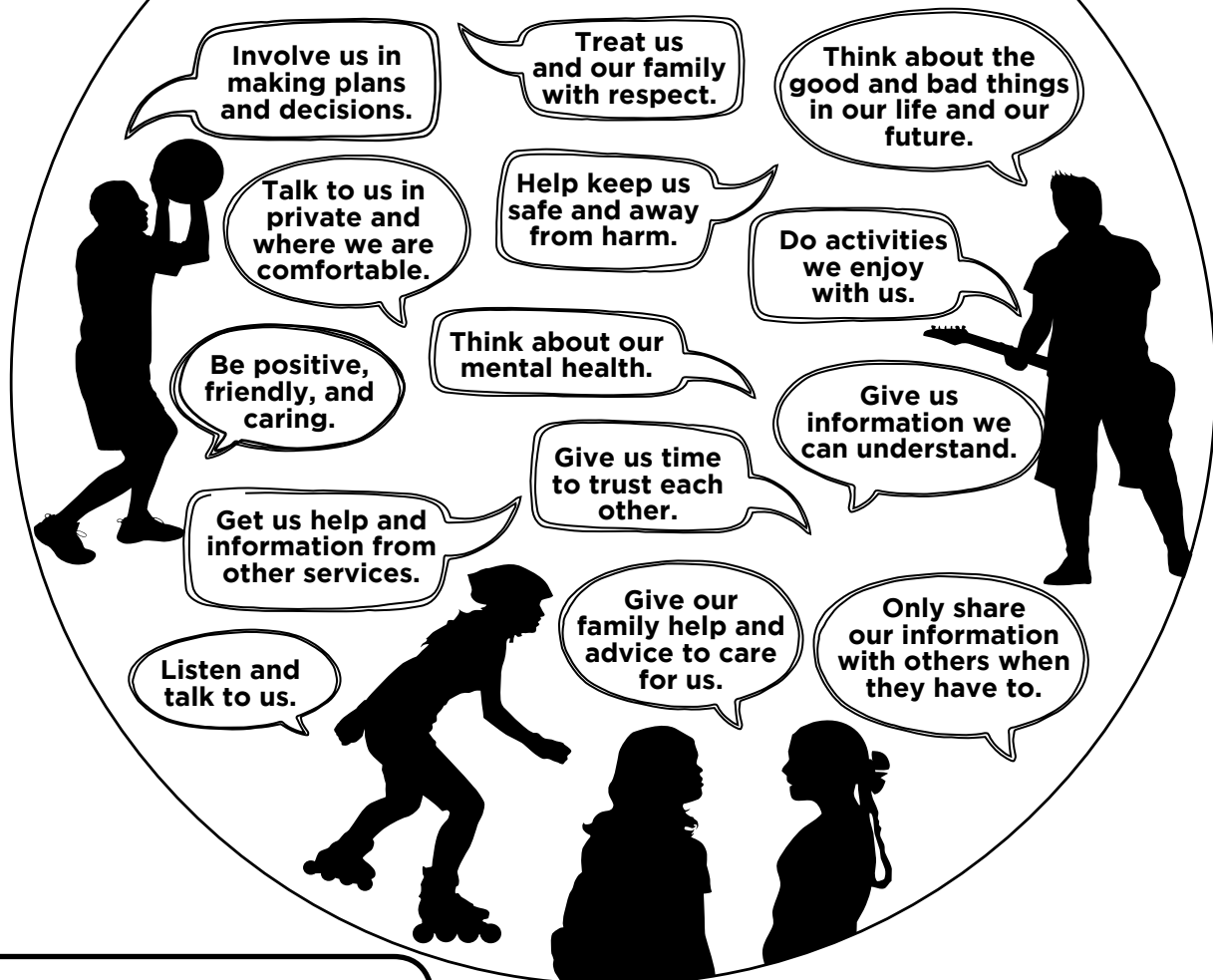
The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies

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:



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.

TUSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies

TUSLA Checklist for Implementing the Children's and Young People's Charters

This checklist is intended to help staff implement the Children's and Young People's Charters. In their work with all children and young people staff should consider the following:

The examples given are based on comments made by the children and young people during the consultations.

<p>Am I respectful towards the child/young person? <i>For example, have I been on time for appointments? Have I been appropriately dressed? Have I spoken in an appropriate tone of voice? Did I give them sufficient time to think about what I am saying and what may be happening?</i></p>	
<p>Have I considered their best interest first and foremost? <i>For example, have I thought about the child/young person's whole life? Have I thought about a range of solutions? Are they as safe as possible?</i></p>	
<p>Am I listening to the child/young person? <i>For example, did I give the child/young person enough time to speak? Am I clear that I fully understood what they told me? Did I check my understanding with the child/young person? Did I get their views on the plans for them?</i></p>	
<p>Do I give the child/young person clear and sufficient information? <i>For example, do I explain who I am, what my role is and why I am here? Do I clearly explain the next steps? Do I tell them when I will see them again?</i></p>	
<p>Do I fully understand the child/young person's life and views? <i>For example, do I check my understanding with the child/young person? Do I ask about their lives outside the 'problem'? Do I have enough information on the child/young person's whole life?</i></p>	
<p>Am I positive towards the child/young person? <i>For example, is my body language, facial expression and tone of voice positive and open? Have I identified the positives in the child/young person's life? Am I focussed on positive and helpful interventions? Am I positive about the child/young person's future?</i></p>	
<p>Am I building a caring and trusting relationship with the child/young person? <i>For example, have I told or shown the child/young person that I care about them and their situation? Do I give the child/young person enough time to trust me? Do I show a genuine interest in the child/young person's well-being and life? Do I keep to the arrangements I make with the child/young person?</i></p>	
<p>Do I meet the child/young person where they are comfortable and have privacy? <i>For example, do I give the child/young person a say in where we meet? Do I offer them breaks, drinks or snacks in meetings? Do I make sure we are not interrupted or overheard when discussing sensitive matters?</i></p>	
<p>Do I help families to care for their children/young people? <i>For example, am I respectful towards the child/young person's family? Do I consider additional services that might help? Do I give families enough information on supports and options? Am I as accessible as possible to families?</i></p>	
<p>Do I respect children/young people's privacy and confidentiality as far as possible? <i>For example, do I explain when I need to share information and who with? Do I ensure that I only share information when necessary?</i></p>	
<p>Do I think about services children/young people need outside of Tusla? <i>For example, do I consider the physical and mental health needs of children/young people? Do I have and share sufficient information about other services? Do I have links with other services that I can refer children/young people and families to?</i></p>	
<p>Am I realistic and honest with children/young people and families about what Tusla can do? <i>For example, do I clearly explain what Tusla can and cannot do? Can I answer questions in a child friendly way about Tusla's role and responsibilities?</i></p>	



The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies

TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency