

An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach Child and Family Agency



## A Guide to F. CARE R, E, P, O, R, T WORDS for Children in **Foster Care**



This dictionary of words was put together by us, the young people from the **Dublin North City Foster** Care Forum 2014 to 2016

DRIGHTS



## A Guide to CARE WORDS for Children in Foster Care

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Forums (Fora) are meetings where people come together to discuss areas of common interest and suggest improvements. So when Tusla wanted the views of young people in foster care, they decided in partnership with EPIC to invite young people to be part of a forum for young people living in foster care.

A forum was set up in May 2014 in Dublin North City (DNC) for young people aged between 12 and 17 years. The purpose of this group was to:

- Listen to young people's views about social work services:
- Encourage young people to meet other young people who are also in foster care;
- Where possible bring about change to improve the young people's experience of the care system.

As part of the DNC forum group, the young people developed a dictionary of words commonly heard when talking about foster care, and have given clear explanations of these words, in order to help other young people, foster carers and professionals have a greater understanding of what they mean.

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S FOREWORD

This dictionary of words was put together by us, the young people from the Dublin North City forum 2014/15. Sometimes some of the language and words that people use about care are words that we hear but don't always understand. We didn't even know some of the words before we started doing this, so we decided to create a dictionary and explain the words in a way that we hope other young people will understand. This dictionary is for young people, but we hope that it will also help social workers and foster carers when explaining care to young people.

We would like to thank all the people who helped us put the dictionary together; we had lots of fun doing it.

## Erin, Paddy, Krystyna, Kathleen, Anita, and Pamela.





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### EPIC AND TUSLA FOREWORD

We as workers in Tusla and EPIC have been very lucky to work with the DNC young people in the foster care forum. Early into the group the young people showed their commitment to the group and their openness and maturity in wanting to support each other and to help the social work service to develop in a positive manner.

They named lots of things that are working well in Tusla, while naming some things they felt could change. One of these was helping young people to understand some of the words they may come across when in care of Tusla and when living with a foster family.

They began to work on writing a dictionary to help other young people, and created many pictures, cards and animations alongside the dictionary.

As workers we had lots of fun supporting the young people throughout the last year in developing the dictionary and we have learnt lots from these amazing young people.

We are very proud of the work of Erin, Kathleen, Anita, Krystyna, Pamela and Paddy. We spent many Saturdays amazed by their skills and commitment. Congratulations on a job well done.

### Myra, Sarah, Larissa and Fiona.

Supported by:







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## SECTION

## Tusla and its workers

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WORKER

### 1. Social Worker

A person who works with children and their families to support them to be safe and well looked after.

Your social worker will visit you regularly to get your views; see what is going well for you, what you may need help with, and explain what is going on.

### 2. Allocated Social Worker

An allocated social worker is your worker who works with you and your family.

Your allocated social worker should see you at least once every three months for the first two years, and then every six months thereafter. Many young people meet their social worker more often. You can always ask for a meeting anytime.

Like with your teachers, your social worker can change regularly. You should be told when this happens and introduced to your new social worker. The new social worker will continue with your care plan to provide you with **consistency** of care.

### 3. Fostering Social Worker/Link Worker

A fostering social worker is your foster carer's social worker. Both you and your foster carers have different social workers. Their job is to assess and support families who foster children. Fostering social workers are sometimes called link workers.



### 4. Team Leader

A team leader is your social worker's boss. They chair your child in care review meetings and help your social worker make decisions. If you are unhappy or worried about something, you can ask to talk to the team leader.

### 5. Principal Social Worker

The principal social worker is the team leader's boss. They are responsible for running the social work department and making sure that you are being cared for in the best possible way. If needed, they can help with making difficult decisions.

### 6. Social Care Leader/Worker

A social care leader/worker helps support young people who live in foster or residential care. They meet with the young person on their own or in a group. A social worker can ask a social care leader/worker to meet with you if you need support or help with anything. They discuss with you what your needs are and how best to support you.

### 7. Access Worker

An access worker helps to organise visits with your birth family. These visits are called access or contact. Lots of young people like to call it 'time with my family'. Access visits are held in a place and at a time to suit you and your family. Sometimes the access worker will stay during the visits with you. This will all be agreed before the visit so you will know what is happening. If you are unsure or want a change, you can ask your social worker or access worker.

### 8. After Care Worker

An after care worker is a support person for young people over 18 years who were in the care of Tusla – Child and Family Agency. The after care worker will meet and support you in many areas of your life such as your education, employment, finances, and accommodation if needed. Your social worker will start to talk to you about preparing for after care after your 16th birthday. After care does not generally mean a change in where you live.





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## SECTION 2

## Others involved

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### 1. Guardian Ad Litem (GAL)

A GAL is an independent person who speaks on your behalf in court. Your GAL meets with you, your family and other important people in your life. The GAL writes a report for the judge, which lets the judge know your views. The report will also make recommendations about how best to care for you. Not all young people will have a GAL. It is also your social workers' job to update the judge on your views. You can ask to write or speak with the judge.

### 2. EPIC

EPIC is an organisation that works with children and young people who are in care, or who were previously in care. They also work with young people who are preparing for adulthood. Your EPIC worker tells you about your rights and supports you to speak up for yourself or speaks up on your behalf if you need them to. Not everyone has an EPIC worker, but if you want a worker, you can contact EPIC directly or your social worker can contact them.

### 3. Therapy

Therapy is a safe space where you can go to express yourself when you are feeling stressed or worried about something in your life. The therapist/counsellor is the name of the person that you talk to.

There are many different types of therapy. You can attend on your own, as part of group or as a family. You can get help in deciding which type suits you best.



## How does Tusla know about my family?

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## SECTION

**G S O N S**

### 1. Child Protection

Child protection is about making sure children are **safe**. It is a social worker's job to ensure that children are protected from harm such as; neglect, emotional, sexual and physical abuse. It is also the job of every adult in the community to report any concerns or worries they have about a young person.

### 2. Referral

Referral is when a person lets the social work department know about concerns or worries for a child or young person. Family members, neighbours, schools, doctors, gardaí, and hospitals often refer to the social work service. Young people or their parents can also self-refer. This is how the social work department get to know families.

### 3. Assessment

Social work assessment is about gathering information to work out what you and your family's needs are. It helps the social worker to make decisions about the best way to keep you safe. This is done by asking for information from different people, e.g. family, school, support groups, anyone you have contact with. The social worker will always talk to you and your family to get your views. You can always ask to speak with the social worker and tell them how you feel. There are many other types of assessments that you may experience, e.g. assessment of how you are doing in school; how you are doing emotionally; medical checks and speech and language assessments.



### 4. Decisions

Decision-making is something we do every day. Once we have information, we can make choices about what to do. After an assessment has been completed, decisions are made about what to do next. Where possible, you should be involved in the decisions that are made about you. If you are unclear about the decision, you can ask for it to be explained.

### 5. Report

A report is a written document containing information about you and your family. Information from the assessments and any decisions made are written in a report. There are many different types of reports, e.g. school, social work, medical and therapeutic reports.

### 6. Child Protection Conference

Child protection conference is a formal meeting that is held when there are serious worries/concerns about a child/young person. Birth parents, family and other people who know the child/young person are invited to attend. If your family has a child protection conference, you can tell your social worker your views or write your views down so they can be shared with all at the meeting. At the meeting everyone talks about what their worries are. Then a decision is made about what should happen to make sure the child/young person is safe and looked after and that their family gets the help they need.

### 7. Files

Within the social work service a file (either paper or digital) is kept for every family which the social worker keeps in a safe, private place. A file includes all documents, reports and information about you and your family - eg. Birth Certificate, care orders, visits to the family, care plans and other reports.

### 8. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about keeping your information private, keeping it confidential. Sometimes your information may need to be shared, if someone is worried about you or you need help with something. Your social worker will talk to you if this happens. The person your information is shared with must also keep it confidential/private.

REFERRAL



## How is a young person placed in the care of Tusla?

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## SECTION

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### 1. Care

Being in care means that you are not living with your birth family because they are unable to care for you. You may live with a foster carer, relative carer or in a residential home. Tusla is responsible for you while you are in care. The social workers will keep your birth parents updated on how you are doing and they will be included in meetings and decisions where possible.

### 2. Short-term/Long-term Care

You can be in short-term or long-term care. The reason and length of time you may be in care is individual to you, and what is happening in your family. You can talk to your carer, family and Social Worker if you have any questions.

### 3. Voluntary Care Agreement

Voluntary care agreement is when birth parents agree with Tusla that the best option for the child/ young person is to be placed into care. If you are in voluntary care, the social worker must get the consent (permission) from your birth parents for all decisions relating to you.

### 4. Court Orders

A court order is when a judge decides that the best option for the child/young person is to be placed in care of Tusla. Birth parents can attend the Court and can speak directly to the judge. Everyone gets a chance to talk to the judge and to suggest a plan to help the child/young person and their family. If your family is attending court, you can tell your views to your social worker, GAL or your family and they can tell the judge.

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You can also ask to send a letter or talk to the judge yourself. The judge will make the final decision. In this court, nobody goes to jail; it is about making decisions and plans to support the child/young person.

There are three types of Court Orders: Emergency Care Order, Interim Care Order and Care Order. The Orders describe how long the child/young person will be in care of Tusla before the court are updated and make a new decision.

- Emergency Care Order (ECO) Up to 8 days in care;
- Interim Care Order (ICO) 28 days, but can be longer if agreed;
- Care Order (CO) Up to the age of 18 years or shorter if agreed.

Gardaí can also take a Section 12 to place a child/ young person in care of Tusla if there is an emergency at night-time or at the weekend, where the Gardaí are very worried about the child/young person.

### 5. Consent

Consent is giving permission to do something.

When a child or young person is in the care of Tusla:

- The birth parent gives consent for the child/young person when they are in voluntary care;
- The social worker gives consent for the child/ young person when there is a **court order**; (sometimes the judge will decide on consent)
- When a young person is 16 years old they can consent for medical treatment:

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When a foster carer is granted **enhanced rights for foster carers by the court**, they can provide consent for the child/young person and update the social worker. A foster carer can apply to the court for enhanced rights for foster carers once the child/young person has lived with them longer than five years, and once everyone agrees with it.

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# **Types of** placements

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SECTION

A Guide to Care Words for Children in Foster Care

### 1. Placement

Placement is a word used to describe the foster or residential home where you are living. A home is a place where a child/young person lives and feels safe. There are lots of different types of families and homes.

### 2. Foster Care

Foster care is when a child/young person in care of Tusla live with a family, who are their foster family.

### 3. Relative Care

Relative care is where a child/young person in the care of Tusla live with a family member such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle or close family friend.

### 4. Foster Carers

Foster carers are people that look after a child/young person while they are in the care of Tusla. They have been checked out by the social worker and assessed as being able to care for the child/young person. An updated assessment is done every year and then every three years and this is called a foster care review. Once you live with your foster family, the fostering social worker continues to meet with your foster carers. They check how you are getting on and support your carers.



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### 5. Residential Care

Residential care is when a child/young person live in a house with other young people and are cared for by social care staff. In residential care, the child/young person will have a key worker who attends all their meetings and gives one to one help.

### 6. Respite Care

Respite is time away for a short agreed time for the child/young person from their foster home, when they are finding it difficult and need a break. It can be with another foster family or a respite residential home.

### 7. Garda Vetting

Garda vetting is a check by the Gardaí to make sure that the person caring for you is suitable to care for you.

Garda vetting is completed with foster carers, residential staff, birth families and Tusla staff. Clubs in the community also complete Garda vetting with all their workers to ensure children and young people are safe, e.g. soccer or dance clubs.

### 8. The 72 hour Rule

Foster carers can agree for a child/young person to stay in friend's homes or with friends for up to 72 hours, without the social worker having to complete checks with this family.





**What** happens when you are in care

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## SECTION

### 1. Statutory Child in Care Review Meeting

This is a meeting to see how you are getting on and to update your care plan.

You can go to the review meeting, or you can meet your social worker to tell them your views. You can complete a review form with your worker before the meeting and you can decide what you want your social worker to say at the meeting. A group of young people, who live in foster care designed forms you can use, called 'TACTIC Child in Care' forms. You do not have to complete a form; you can chat to your worker about your views. Getting your views is the most important thing, how the social worker gets them is up to you.

Your first review meeting should happen within two months of you moving to live with your foster family and then six months later. If you have lived with your foster family for more than two years, the review meeting will take place once per year.

### 2. Care Plan

Every child/young person in care of Tusla has a care plan. This is a written report about how you are getting on, including positive changes, your achievements, and what things you would like help and support with. This is all discussed at the review meeting and then the social worker will write up your care plan. Your social worker should tell you about decisions in your care plan and you can ask for a copy of the plan.



### 3. Who Talks to Your School?

Mostly foster carers attend your parent teacher meeting and link with your school. If you live in a residential home, your key worker will attend. Your social worker will get reports every year on how school is for you, which they share with your family at the review meeting. Your information is private and only shared with people in school who need to know.

Teachers, foster parents, and social workers can work together if you have a particular issue or need in school and can all meet to chat about how best to support you.

### 4. Complaints

All children and young people can make a complaint if they are unhappy with the care they are receiving or if they are unhappy with the social work service. You can ask your social worker or an adult how to make a complaint or you can get information online www.tusla.ie. You can talk to your social worker, foster carer, family or any adult if you have a complaint and they will help you.

### 5. Access

Access is another word for time spent with your birth family. It can also be called family contact or time with your family. The plan for this family time is individual to each child/young person, and should be explained to you.

### 6. Supervised Access

Supervised access is where an agreed adult (family or a worker) will stay with the child/young person during family time.

### 7. Funding

Funding is the money provided by Tusla to help in the care of children/young people. Social workers have to ask permission in writing (funding request) to the area manger if extra money is needed under special circumstances for a child/young person.

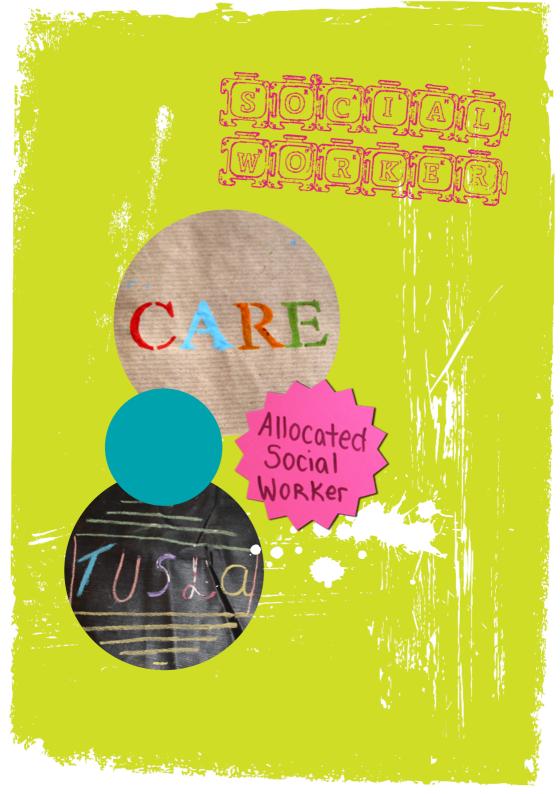
### 8. Rights

As a child/young person in care, you have the same rights as any other child/young person living in Ireland. These rights are outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Ombudsman for Children's Office promotes all children's rights.

The TACTIC group of young people in care wrote a young person's version of the National Standards for Foster and Residential Care, which explains your rights in care and what should happen to make sure you are getting cared for to a high standard. You should be given a copy of this booklet by your social worker. You can ask your social worker for a copy if you don't have one and they can answer any questions you have about it.

People who work for HIQA have the job of making sure everyone is following these standards. Like a school inspection, HIQA workers sometimes inspect the social work offices to make sure everyone is doing a good job on following the national standards. Anyone can also contact HIQA if they are worried.

As a child or young person in the care of Tusla, you should be treated by everyone with **respect** and as an individual. It is also your responsibility to treat others with respect.



This dictionary of words was put together by us, the young people from the Dublin North City Foster Care Forum 2014 to 2016

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Young people's views about working on this project and on being part of the DNC Young Person Forum for Foster Care:

> 'You don't have to give up every single Saturday, just a few.'

> > 'There is really good pizza.'

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'You

make new

friends.'

'It's welcoming and you have something in common with the other young people.'

C

'It's good to communicate with other kids.'

Rec

'It's easier to communicate with other kids.'

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'l like the activities we do.' **Design by www.penhouse.ie**