

The logo for TúsLA, featuring the word 'TúsLA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The 'ú' has a dot above it, and the 'L' is stylized with a horizontal bar that extends to the right.

TúsLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

**National Research Office,
Quality and Regulation
Directorate**

**Research Advisory Group
Terms of Reference
2025-2027
(2025 Revised)**

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1. Background

Tusla's Research Advisory Group (RAG) in operation since 2015 is a partner in the work of Tusla's National Research Office (NRO) Quality and Regulation Directorate. The Terms of Reference (TORs) of the RAG were reviewed in 2018 and again in 2024, after consultation between both partners. The TORs were approved on 26th March 2025.

The RAG continues to be a vital component of the research infrastructure within the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). The revised TORs for 2025-2027 align with the recently approved Tusla Research Strategy 2024-2029.

The RAG will advise, support and facilitate discussion to support the implementation of Tusla's research programme and provide an important stakeholder approach to identifying and prioritising research projects during the lifetime of the strategy.

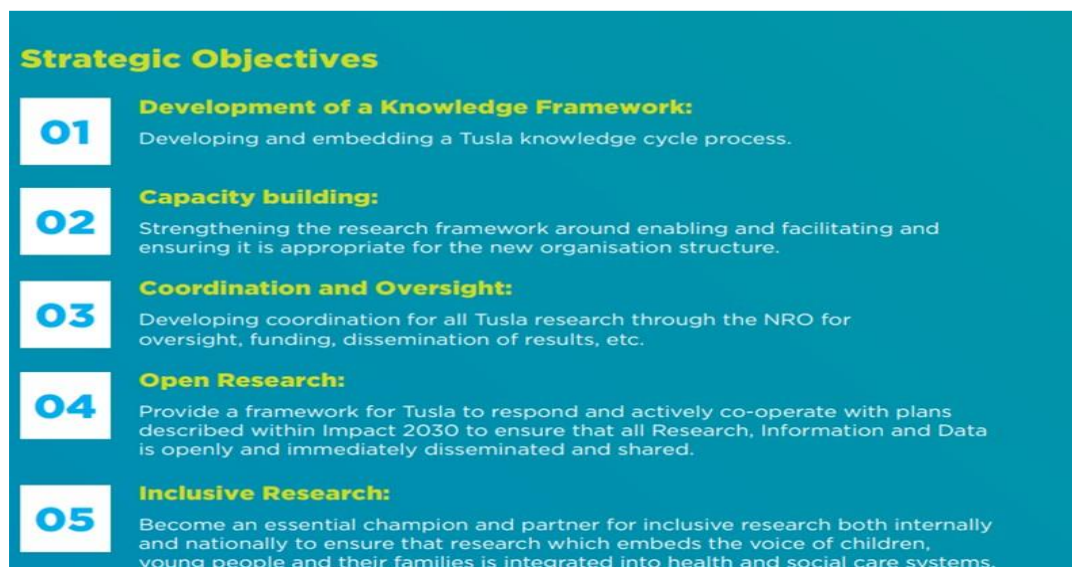
The process of supporting and facilitating Tusla's Research programme is via formal RAG meetings, shared learning events, information sharing and networking. Key strengths of the RAG include building consensus and integrating the breadth and depth of knowledge across a wide and diverse stakeholder group.

The Tusla RAG is representative of a wide range of stakeholders internal and external to Tusla with an interest in promoting and supporting the improvement of services for children, families and communities through research. It includes representatives across Tusla's practice domains, as well as advocacy bodies representing service users, academic institutions, regulatory bodies, professional associations and research institutions, all with the aim of supporting links between research and practice.

The RAG provides expert advice and feedback to Tusla on aspects of its research programme, strategy and development. Its input helps to enhance the quality of both research processes and the research findings through eliciting a broad spectrum of experiences and views.

RAG members have been appointed to provide expert, interdisciplinary advice and commentary on the implementation of the high-level objectives identified within Tusla's Research Strategy 2024-2029 (see Figure 1) as well as research priorities identified from within Tusla through the ongoing Research and Information Needs Analysis (RINA). Additionally, advice provided by the RAG enables Horizon Scanning to take place which enables the identification of research priorities external to Tusla, which can inform wider child and family strategy, policy and practice.

Figure 1



2. Role of the Advisory Group

- To provide specialist advice on Tusla's research programme, strategy and developments, including Tusla's statutory requirements in the Child and Family Agency Act Section 8 (1)(f).
- To provide a forum for discussion of the identification and prioritization of research priorities identified via NRO research and information needs processes and Tusla research strategy, including:
 - available evidence on the effectiveness of services;
 - gaps in information, data and research;
 - emerging areas of research;
 - international best practice in child care and related services;
 - capturing relevant research that is not represented across the membership's research knowledge;
 - Wider Tusla programmes and strategies.
- To promote and support collaborative research, including identifying cross-cutting research themes and priorities.
- To advise on Tusla's strategic approach to the commissioning of internally and externally funded research including leveraging research funding, research collaborations and research partnerships.
- To advise Tusla on approaches to evidence-informed practice, dissemination, knowledge translation, implementation and research impact.

- To advise Tusla on relevant research methodologies, particularly participatory methods for children and young people.
- To provide a forum to discuss the findings/outputs of Tusla commissioned research and implication for practice internally and across relevant external members.
- Provide a forum where a mix of government and non-government statutory and voluntary agencies can influence Tusla's research programme with childcare and related services.

Tusla Values and Behaviours

All members of RAG recognise that:

- All members of the RAG will uphold the Tusla values of respect, kindness, trust and empowerment and work with empathy and inclusion for each other and for all those involved in the RAG.

3. Responsibilities of the Research Advisory Group Chair

The responsibilities of the Chair are as follows:

- Works with the NRO and RAG members to set the agenda for each meeting;
- Ensures that agendas and supporting materials are delivered to members in advance of meetings. The Chair will indicate to members in advance which materials are for information purposes and which it is essential they should have consulted in preparation for participation in the meeting.
- Makes the purpose of each meeting clear to members and explains the agenda at the beginning of each meeting;
- Clarifies and summarises what is happening throughout each meeting; and seeks assent from members before proceeding further;
- Manages the agenda effectively by putting time limits on each agenda item and keeping all meetings to two hours or less;
- Encourages broad participation from members in discussion by calling on different people;
- Ends each meeting with a summary of decisions and signs off on minutes of meeting;

- Should the Chair be unable to attend a meeting, the Deputy Chair will carry responsibility for the meeting. The Deputy Chair will be a staff member of the National Research Office.

4. Responsibilities of Research Advisory Group Members

Individual members have the following responsibilities:

- Uphold Tusla's values and behaviours and complies with Tusla's Public Sector Duty.
- Understand the goals, objectives, and desired outcomes of the Research Advisory Group;
- Understand and represent the interests of children, families and communities, Tusla service users and stakeholders;
- Take a genuine interest in the RAG's outcomes and overall success;
- Share the learning from RAG members across respective networks and emphasise the purpose and value of RAG to members and others to build a shared understanding of the RAG;
- Actively participate in meetings through attendance, discussion, and review of minutes, papers and other Advisory Group documents;
- Support open discussion and debate and encourage fellow Advisory Group members to voice their insights on all aspects of the RAG role as per section 2.

5. Membership

- Membership of the Research Advisory Group is by invitation of the Executive Director of the Quality and Regulation Directorate. Membership of the group, including members of Tusla's National Research office, will be composed of up to 25 members.
- Delegates are permissible, provided the RAG Chairperson is given advance notification of one week.
- The Term of Membership is 3 years (2025-2027), which can be extended by agreement with the Chair of the RAG.
- Non-members can be invited to a RAG meeting to present on relevant matters. Non-members could include Tusla staff, external researchers and the Chairperson of Tusla's Independent Research Ethics Committee.

A member should not serve more than two consecutive terms.

- Renewal of membership for a second consecutive term will be the decision of the Executive Director of the Quality and Regulation Directorate on the recommendation of the Research Advisory Group Chair.
- External members travel and subsistence expenses should be reimbursed from their own Agency/organisation.
- Travel and subsistence expenses for Public Contributors will be considered in accordance with Tusla Financial Regulations and approved Tusla guidance.

The table below lists the membership of the Research Advisory Group.

Organisation	Role/Service
Tusla: Chair	National Manager for Research, Tusla
Tusla National Research Office	National Research Office Team members
Tusla services: to represent Social Work, Social Care, Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Services (including representation from Children and Young People Services Committees (CYPSCs) and/or Child and Family Support Networks) x 3	Tusla Professional Development Manager National Service Manager Office of Chief Social Worker
Tusla: Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)	Experienced practitioner/manager
Tusla: Early Years/Childrens Regulation Service	Experienced practitioner/manager
Relevant Academic institutions (HEIs): e.g. Social Work / Social Care / Psychology/ Education/ Early years/regulation / workforce (x 6)	Academics' working in relevant Tusla research subject matter domains with particular focus on research to practice
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY): Research and Evaluation Unit	Research staff
Research bodies: e.g. / Health Research Board (HRB)/ Research Ireland/ Public Patient Involvement (PPI) Ignite Network	Research staff

Advocacy: e.g. Empowering Young People in Care (EPIC), Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA), Tusla Advisory Group (TAG), Care Experiences Programme Care Experienced Expert Panel (CEEP) member	Experienced advocacy practitioner/manager/care experienced young person
Social Inclusion: e.g. Child Poverty and Well-Being Programme, An Taoiseach, The Wheel	Experienced practitioner/manager
Regulatory Body: e.g. HIQA	Experienced manager
Professional Body: e.g. Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW), SCI (Social Care Ireland), The Psychological Society Ireland (PSI)	Experienced practitioner/manager
Interagency research collaborators: An Garda Síochána (AGS) Research Unit, HSE Research and Development Unit, CUAN	Experienced manager

6. Quorum and Decision making

Quorum

All external members who are appointed to the role are required to attend a minimum of two Research Advisory Group meetings in a twelve-month period to ensure meetings are quorate for decision making purposes. If a member is unable to attend these two meetings, their membership of the RAG will cease and a replacement member will be sought.

Advice-giving process

The overall role of the Advisory Group is to provide expert advice to Tusla in relation to Tusla's research programme, strategy and developments.

7. Frequency of Meetings

Advisory Group meetings are held normally on a quarterly basis. However the Group may decide to meet more frequently or less frequently as required e.g. a minimum of two meetings in a twelve month period. At least one quarterly meeting should be held face-to-face and should focus on an agreed theme.

8. Agenda, Minutes and Decision Papers

Communication with the members will be via email. The National Research Office Administrator will maintain an up-to-date distribution list for the purpose of communication with the RAG and will be kept in accordance with Tusla's Data Protection Policies. Members will be sent email communications seven business days in advance of an Advisory Group meeting. The email communication will include the following:

- Agenda for upcoming meeting;
- Minutes of previous meeting;
- Any other documents/information to be considered at the meeting.

9. Format of meetings

The work of the Advisory Group will mainly be carried out via formal meetings to facilitate open discussions. Formal presentations by members will be featured followed by facilitated discussion sometimes in a workshop format. Depending on agendas, external Tusla staff, external researchers and other relevant inputs will be considered. Meetings will be facilitated via MTeams and face to face.

A summary of advices, views and recommendations of the Advisory Group will be communicated to all members of the Advisory Group and to the Executive Director of the Quality and Regulation Directorate who is a member of Tusla Executive Management Team (EMT). Summaries may be published on the Tusla Research Centre web pages.

10. Review and Feedback

The TORs will be reviewed by the National Research Office and RAG members every 18 months to ensure that they are being complied with. Changes to the TORs will be approved by the Executive Director for Quality and Regulation.

The NRO may issue an annual member feedback survey for the purpose of gathering member feedback to improve the operation of the Group.

