

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.

The cost of childcare will be covered by the sponsored subsidy, and the service provider cannot request any co-payment for a child referred to the Scheme by a sponsor body.

Tusla is one of the five sponsor bodies that can make referrals. Details on the criteria for the Tusla to make a sponsor referral are set out below.

Who can Tusla refer?

Tusla may refer children from birth to 15 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 15 years, and who need additional care and protection as part of the provision of childcare and family support services by Tusla
- Who are deemed by Tusla to require childcare services 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?

Tusla will fill out a referral form for you. This form will tell you the number of hours of childcare that are being subsidised, up to a maximum of 45 hours per week. You can use your subsidised hours with any participating Tusla registered childcare service.

The referral form will also tell you how long the referral will last, this may be up to a maximum of 60 weeks. However, it might be for a shorter period if Tusla decides this meets your needs. Your referral may be renewed at the discretion of Tusla.

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 for childcare made?

Tusla will submit an application to the Scheme Administrator for processing.

The Scheme Administrator will then give Tusla a 'CHICK' for you to claim your subsidised hours.

Your CHICK is your unique **CH**ildcare **I**dentification **C**ode **K**ey. Your service provider will use this code to unlock your NCS hours



What do I need to do?

You will need to find a participating, Tusla registered childcare service that can provide the hours needed. You will then need to bring your CHICK, child's name and date of birth to the service provider.

The service provider will register the child using the above information. The free place is then available to use and will be paid for under the Scheme. Service providers cannot request any co-payment, deposit or any additional payments for a child referred to the Scheme by a sponsor body.

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.gov.ie/childcare.

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

How much will I have to pay?

The full cost of the hours the sponsor has recommended will be paid under the Scheme directly to the childcare provider – you do 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 the service, the sponsor body will be notified and payments may be affected.

What happens when the referral ends?

A referral may cover up to 60 weeks. If the sponsorship is to continue, the HSE will need to 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, www.ncs.gov.ie

In either case, you should be contacted by the HSE 20 working 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?

For general information on the scheme visit www.ncs.gov.ie or call the NCS Parent Support Centre on **01 906 8530** from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.