

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 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. Details on the relevant criteria for Tusla 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 are in need of 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 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.

How is the referral made?

Tusla will assess if a family meets the criteria for a Sponsor Referral.

There are three ways a Sponsor Referral can be submitted: **Offline, Hybrid or Online**.

(Before submitting a Sponsor Referral, please check with your Designated Contact which route they are accepting Applications)

1. Offline Submission

A referral form is completed by a **Tusla** staff member working with the family. The staff member will determine if the family meets the criteria for the child to be Sponsored. Once the form is fully completed, it must be signed and stamped by a **Senior Manager Prevention Partnership and Family Support** (or their delegate) as the **Designated Contact**. The signed form is then submitted to the NCS Administration for processing as a CHICK Code.

2. Hybrid Submission

Similar to the offline process, a **Tusla** staff member completes the referral form after assessing the family's eligibility. However, the form will be sent to the NCS Administration, who will upload it to the Sponsor Portal. It is then submitted for approval to the **Senior Manager Prevention Partnership and Family Support** (or their delegate).

3. Online Submission

A **Tusla** staff member completes the referral directly on the **Sponsor Portal**, entering all the required details (Identical to those on the offline form). Once completed, the referral is submitted for approval on the sponsor portal to the **Senior Manager Prevention Partnership and Family Support** (or their delegate)

What ages of children are covered?

Children from birth up to 15 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 on the referral form. The maximum amount of funded childcare available is 45 hours per week.

How long will the referral last?

The referral can last up to a maximum of 60 weeks, but it may be for a shorter period based on the individual needs of the family as determined by Tusla. After 60 weeks, provided the child is eligible a new sponsor referral can be submitted.

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. They will then need to bring their CHICK along with child's name and date of birth to the service provider.

The service provider will register the child using the above details. The free 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.gov.ie/childcare . 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 or provide a deposit for the place.

How does the provider get paid?

All payments will go directly to the childcare service.

What happens when the referral ends?

A referral may cover up to 60 weeks. 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 doesn't need to be renewed, the family can instead apply for a non-sponsored childcare subsidy on www.ncs.gov.ie.

In either case, the family should be contacted **20 working days** before the end of the referral by Tusla 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 Sponsor Team on

01 9068535 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

