

## Targeted Support for Families – Referral Pathways

In supporting a national response to the unfolding emergency situation in Ukraine, Tusla is responding in a number of ways across the continuum of child protection and family support. This document is intended for anybody who is in contact with Ukrainian children and young people at community level.

Where a need for intervention or targeted support has been identified at community level, please follow Tusla's standard referral pathways, as outlined below.

### **Child Protection**

It is everyone's responsibility to protect children and young people and to do our best to keep them safe. [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#) sets out the steps which should be taken to ensure that the child or young person is protected from harm.

**Individuals Working with Children:** You should always inform Tusla when you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If you ignore what may be symptoms of abuse, it could result in ongoing harm to the child. It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that you have reasonable grounds for concern. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it. If you report a concern, you can be assured that your information will be carefully considered with any other information available and a child protection assessment will be carried out where sufficient risk is identified.

**Mandated persons:** Although everyone is responsible for protecting children and young people, as a mandated person, under the Children First Act 2015 you are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. If you are satisfied that this [threshold of harm](#) has been reached, you should clearly identify when reporting that you are making a mandated report made under the Children First Act 2015. If you are in doubt whether your concern reaches the legal definition of harm for making a mandated report, Tusla can provide advice in this regard. Mandated reporters must submit their report in writing.

**Contact Details:** To discuss or report a concern the Tusla Duty Social Work service should be contacted. You can report your concerns to the local social work duty service in the area where the child lives.

- Contact details are available at: <https://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/duty-social-work-teams/>
- Professionals working directly with clients, should make a referral through the Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Referral Portal: <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/>

## Family Support

Family Support is a style of work and a wide range of activities that strengthen positive informal social networks through community-based programmes and services. The main focus of these services is on early intervention aiming to promote and protect the health, well-being and rights of all children, young people and their families. At the same time particular attention is given to those who are vulnerable or at risk.

- Individuals and families who require targeted support should be directed through existing pathways and networks to the relevant services. In relation to local support services, the Child and Family Support Network staff can be contacted for additional advice and support. Information and contact details are available at:  
<https://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/child-and-family-support-network-co-ordinators/>

## Section 23 of the Child Care Act as amended by the Children Act 2001

### What is Section 23?

Where a child under 18 years is being cared for in a private arrangement by an adult who is not a parent, guardian or relative to that child, the adult has a statutory duty to notify Tusla, The Child and Family Agency. Once Tusla has been notified of this arrangement, it allows for investigation under Section 23.

Tusla must be notified of any private foster care arrangement no less than 30 days in advance of the placement, or in the case of an emergency, not more than 14 days after the placement.

Section 23 (O) states:

*'private foster care arrangement' means any arrangement or undertaking whereby a child is for more than 14 days in the full-time care, for reward or otherwise, of a person other than his or her parent or guardian, a person cohabiting with a parent or guardian or a relative,'*

And

*'relative', in relation to a child, means a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt, whether of the whole blood, half blood or by affinity, and includes the spouse of any such person and any person cohabiting with any such person.'*

### What to do if you become aware of a S23 arrangement:

- 1) If the carer has not already notified Tusla, when a service becomes aware of a S23 arrangement as provided for by the legislation – a child in the care of a person who is not a parent, guardian or relative as outlined above – a referral to the social work department through the Child protection and Welfare Referral portal should be made:  
<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/web-portal/>.
- 2) The adult providing care to the child should be advised that the service will be contacting Tusla to inform them of the arrangement. The service should provide contact details of the local social work dedicated contact point, so that the adult providing care can make contact if any concerns arise in the arrangement.