

Child protection concerns

If you are a member of the public and you have any concerns about the welfare of a child you should contact [Tusla Child and Family Agency Child Protection Social Work Services](#).

If you work or are a volunteer in an organisation that has a child protection policy, you should in the first instance follow this.

If you think a child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla the Child and Family Agency, you should contact An Garda Síochána at any Garda station or your GP (General Medical Practitioner).

For more information see: [Child Protection and Welfare information from the Department of Children](#).

Child protection concerns in a school

Each school must have a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in place for dealing with child protection concerns. The name of the DLP should be displayed in a prominent position near the main entrance to the school.

The school DLP has responsibility for ensuring that the standard reporting procedure is followed, so that suspected child protection concerns are referred promptly to the designated person in [Tusla the Child and Family Agency](#) or in the event of an emergency and the unavailability of Tusla, to An Garda Síochána.

The Department of Education cannot advise you on any child protection concern and the department cannot assure you of confidentiality if you bring a child protection concern to the attention of its staff.

The department has no role in assessing or investigating child protection concerns and cannot establish if there are any reasonable grounds to formally refer them to Tusla.

For more information on child protection procedures in primary and post-primary schools, see [Child Protection Procedures in Schools](#).

Reporting a concern about a child's welfare and protection in a school

If you wish to report a child protection concern you should speak to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in your school and that person will be responsible for making the report.

Where the allegation or concern relates to the DLP, you should without delay, report the matter to the chairperson of the board of management or in schools where the education and training board (ETB) is the employer to the chief executive of the ETB concerned. In such cases, the chairperson or CEO as appropriate shall assume the role normally undertaken by the DLP and shall follow the procedures set out in [section 4.2 of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017](#).

The school's DLP will determine whether reasonable grounds for the concern exist and therefore if the matter should be reported to [Tusla the Child and Family Agency](#).

The safety and well-being of the child must take priority as the guiding principle for the school DLP/Deputy DLP in deciding whether to report child protection concerns to Tusla. In cases where there are concerns about a child, but the DLP is not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the DLP shall seek advice from Tusla. In cases where there are concerns about a child and the DLP is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or concern he/she shall report the matter to Tusla immediately.

A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person where reasonable grounds for the concern exist, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be communicated to Tusla.

If the school's DLP decides not to make a report, you may still make a report directly to [Tusla Child and Family Agency Child Protection Social Work Services](#) by contacting your local social work office. Tusla will tell you how best to proceed. It may then contact the school or ask you to contact the school or others.

You can report a child protection concern to the Department of Education, however, if you contact the department, the department must pass on your concern to Tusla and/or the school authorities (and/or An Garda Síochána). We must pass them on even if you ask to speak with us in confidence. The department will pass on your concern without judgement. All information regarding child protection concerns will be shared by the department with the relevant authorities on 'a need to know' basis in the best interests of the child with the relevant statutory authorities.

All concerns received by staff of the department must be dealt with in accordance with the department's [procedures for responding to child protection concerns which come to the attention of staff of the Department of Education](#). These procedures set out what is required of all staff of the Department of Education when they receive or become aware of information which contains a possible child protection or welfare concern.

You can contact the department by:

- email: childprotection@education.gov.ie or
- phone: (090) 648 4099.

Reporting a concern to a school or the department without giving your name

Neither the school nor the department can assure confidentiality to people who report a child protection concern to them. Not giving your name does not change what the department or schools do with your concern. However by not giving your name, or not wanting your name associated with the concern, an examination and investigation of the concern may be restricted or inhibited.

Reporting a child protection concern, that is subsequently found to be false

You will not get into trouble for reporting a concern that is subsequently found to be false, so long as you report reasonably and in good faith. The Oireachtas has passed legislation called the [Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998](#). In summary this means

that even if a reported child protection concern proves unfounded, the person who reported the concern cannot be prosecuted if the accusation was made in good faith. However, a person who makes a false report of child abuse, knowing that statement to be false, is guilty of an offence and may be prosecuted.

If there is a concern about your child

If there is a concern about your child and the school Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or concern he/she shall report the matter to [Tusla - the Child and Family Agency](#) immediately.

When such a report is being made to Tusla, the DLP will also inform you (as the child's parent/guardian) unless doing so is likely to endanger the child or to place the child at further risk. The DLP will also inform the board of management.

When Tusla - the Child and Family Agency receives a referral of a child protection / welfare concern, you will be contacted by a social worker to tell you about the referral and to ask you for your help to carry out an assessment of the concern. The social worker will aim to involve you in the assessment at all times. A social worker will always examine the needs of a child alongside your needs and those of other members of the family.

If you are the subject of a child protection concern

If you are the subject of a child protection concern, you have a right to discuss this concern with the Tusla social worker who is assessing the concern. It is always better to be open and cooperative so as to assist any assessment that the social worker is undertaking and to avoid misunderstanding. This will allow the social worker the best opportunity to determine whether there is an ongoing risk to the child.

Where it can be proven that a person knowingly made a false report they are liable to be prosecuted under the [Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998](#).

Who to contact if you were abused as a child

The HSE National Counselling Service is in place to listen to, value and understand those who have been abused in childhood. The service is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service and is available free of charge in all regions of the country. The service can be accessed either through healthcare professionals or by way of self-referral (Freephone 1800 477477).

Questions

If you have any questions about our Child Protection Procedures and Safeguarding statement please contact the front office.