

June 2020



National Early Years Children First Programme  
Talking to Parents About Child Protection or Welfare Concerns

If you have a concern regarding the protection or welfare of a child in your service you should follow your service's Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. The DLP in your setting is a resource person to support you if you have child protection and welfare concerns about children.

Your Child Safeguarding Policy should outline who will speak to parents/carers about concerns that arise. Best practice is that this is the role of the DLP. There may be situations where other staff members may be better placed to speak to parents and this decision should be made in conjunction with the DLP.

There are a number of situations in which you may need to speak to parents. You may have concerns about a child's welfare or protection in their own home or you may have concerns about their safety or welfare elsewhere in the community. A concern may arise regarding a child being bullied or are engaging in bullying themselves. These concerns also need to be discussed with parents.

The unique relationship between ELC practitioners and parents is a protective factor for children who may be at risk. Informal and formal discussions can be used to check in with parents if you are concerned about a child. This discussion can be useful in helping you to establish your level of concern for the child.

It can be daunting speaking to parents or carers about your concerns, so we have compiled a number of tips that may be useful to support practitioners to speak with parents/carers to address concerns that they may have.

**REMEMBER: IF A REPORT NEEDS TO BE MADE TO TUSLA, DO NOT DELAY**

It is best practice that parents/guardians are informed if a report is to be made to Tusla, unless doing so might:

- further endanger the child
- impair Tusla's ability to carry out an assessment
- put the reporter at risk of harm.

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**Talking to Parents:**

- Make sure parents/guardians have prior awareness of your guiding principles, procedures and duties to safeguard children.
- Be straightforward and clearly explain the nature of the concern or issue, e.g. by using facts and records of observations made.
- Think about the time and place to have the conversation. Find a time when parents/guardians are not in a hurry.
- Find a place that is quiet and allows privacy.
- Consider arranging to meet parents/guardians.
- Consider with the DLP who is best placed to have the conversation with the parents/guardians.
- Use a calm and gentle tone, consider the language used.
- Start with positive comments and observations about the child/young person. Ensure that the parents/guardians know that you care about the welfare of their child and recognise their strengths.
- Refer to how the situation may be affecting the child/young person.
- Start with positive comments and observations about the parents/guardians. Most parents/guardians are trying to do their best for their children and will appreciate your acknowledgement of how challenging parenting can be at times.
- Give the parents/ guardians an opportunity to talk; ask them for an explanation and acknowledge their feelings.
- Take the approach that you are working together to address any issues in the best interests of the child/young person.
- Don't blame, don't get defensive and don't take things personally. Ensure that you are supportive but also address the issue.
- Refer to your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures for support.
- Offer possible solutions, where appropriate.
- Advise parents/guardians how you plan to follow up and keep them informed and involved, where appropriate.

**Parents/guardians should be made aware of your guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures on initial contact with your service. You should consider including your declaration of guiding principles in literature about your service and activities that you give to families (e.g. handbook for parents/guardians).**

For more information, please see Tusla: A Child Safeguarding; A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice

[https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla - Child Safeguarding - A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_-_Child_Safeguarding_-_A_Guide_for_Policy,_Procedure_and_Practice.pdf)