

GUIDANCE ON 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 reporting procedure. 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 where the DLP may need to speak to parents. One such situation is where there are concerns about a child's welfare or protection in their own home or about their safety or welfare elsewhere in the community. Concerns may also arise regarding a child being bullied or are engaging in bullying themselves.

These concerns need to be discussed with parents.

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.

The unique relationship between ELC and SAC 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.

Talking to Parents

- Parents should be given a copy of the service's Child Safeguarding Statement
- 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 making an appointment to meet with parents
- The DLP should consider 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. 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
- Include 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
- 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](#)