



**The Child and Family Agency, Tusla
Barnardos Partner Agency**

**Information for Parents in relation to
Initial Assessments**

Information for Parents

The Child and Family Agency, Tusla are working in partnership with Barnardos in Dublin North to provide a service for families. When Tusla receives a referral about a child's safety or welfare, it has a legal duty to meet with the parents and children to discuss the concerns raised in the referral and make sure that the children named in the referral are safe. This process is called an Initial Assessment. *Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)* provides guidance which says that Tusla may also ask another service to carry out the assessment on their behalf and meet with families in response these concerns.

Tusla Social Work Department have received a referral in relation to your family and asked Barnardos Dublin North to undertake an Initial Assessment on their behalf. To begin this process you will be allocated a Barnardos Project Worker who will contact you to discuss the assessment details and process with you and your family. The assessment will explore the reasons why your family was referred to Tusla and following this, the worker will make recommendations to Tusla regarding what supports your family might need to ensure your children's safety and wellbeing.

What does the assessment involve?

The assessment will involve a Barnardos Project Worker making contact with you to organise a meeting with you and your children. These meetings may take place in your home, or in one of Barnardos family centres in the area. The worker completing the assessment will explain to you exactly what kind of questions will be asked and why and what the process will involve. An important part of the assessment will be meeting with your child. Meetings with children will explore a typical day in a child's life and any worries they may have.

The assessment will also require that your worker speak to other professionals that are involved with your family such as your child's school, GP and so forth. Your worker will talk to you about who else they may need to speak to and will seek your consent to do this.

Your worker will ask you to gather a number of people relevant to you and your children in day to day life to form a network of people around you who can be involved in helping you create a safety plan going forward for your family.

How is my confidentiality protected?

Both Tusla and Barnardos completely respect your right to privacy. Any personal information provided will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality and will be

strictly held in accordance with the Data Protection Acts, 1988, 2003 and the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003.

A record of the assessment and any work completed by Barnardos and contact they have with you will be held by Barnardos for the duration of the assessment only. Once the Barnardos assessment is complete, the file will be returned to Tusla who will keep the record of your assessment and its outcome.

You have a right to access information held about you and to ensure that it is accurate and up to date. Your rights in this regard will be explained to you by your worker.

What happens after the assessment is completed?

Once the assessment is complete, your worker will share with you its details and discuss all recommendations with you. It will clearly outline the strengths and safety factors that are evident in your family, as well as any worries that may exist about your child's well-being. Your worker will make recommendations to Tusla, outlining whether they feel that your file should be closed or whether it should be returned to Tusla for further follow up. Your worker may also offer you further support services if they feel you and your children may need additional support. This could involve support from Tusla or another service. You will have a choice whether you wish to accept any services offered, except in circumstances where your worker has formed the opinion that your child(ren) may be at risk of ongoing harm if you didn't accept services offered.

Following completion of the assessment your file will be returned to the Child and Family Agency Principal Social Worker for final review, once reviewed you will receive an official response from the Child and Family Agency which will confirm the outcome of the assessment.

What happens now?

Once you give your consent to your Tusla Social Worker, your file will be discussed with the Barnardos Project Leader, who will then allocate your file to a Barnardos Project Worker. This worker will soon be in touch to arrange an initial meeting with you to explain the process further and begin the assessment. You will be asked to sign a Barnardos consent form at this meeting.

What happens if I do not wish to participate in the assessment?

If you do not wish to participate in the assessment with Barnardos an assessment will still be required as we have an obligation under law to complete one once worries have been raised with Tusla.

