



Information on Reasonable Grounds for Concern

[Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children \(2017\)](#) states that “you should always inform Tusla - Child and Family Agency 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 on-going harm to a 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.”

The HSE has developed a training module on Reasonable Grounds for Concern that can be viewed at: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/primarycare/childrenfirst/training/>

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse.
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused.
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

Further details on reasonable grounds for concern and when to make a report are in the [Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook](#) (2011) and in the [HSE Child Protection and Welfare Policy](#).

If any member of staff has reasonable grounds for concern they have a responsibility to make a report to the [Duty Social Worker](#) in Tusla - Child and Family Agency

It is recommended that a report should always be made to Tusla in the following circumstances:
(Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2011, Section 2.3)

- any concern about a child at risk of sexual abuse;
- physical injury caused by assault or neglect which may or may not require medical attention;
- incidents of physical abuse that alone are unlikely to constitute significant harm, but taken into consideration with other factors may do so;
- children who suffer from persistent neglect;
- children who live in an environment which is likely to have an adverse impact on their emotional development;
- where parents' own emotional impoverishment affects their ability to meet their child's emotional and/or physical needs, regardless of material/financial circumstances and assistance;
- where parents circumstances are adversely affecting their capacity to meet the child's needs because of domestic violence, drug and/or alcohol misuse, mental health problems, intellectual disability;
- a child living in a household with, or having significant contact with, a person at risk of sexual offending or with previous convictions for offences against children;
- an abandoned child;
- children left home alone;
- bruising/injury to a pre-mobile baby;
- pregnancy where children have been previously removed;

The above are examples of circumstances that may occur. There are other circumstances under which a report should be considered. If you are in any doubt, discuss your concern with your line manager, Designated Liaison Person or call a Tusla Duty Social Worker for an informal consultation. For information on circumstances that that may make children more vulnerable to harm see Tusla's [Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook 2](#) (2018).

Retrospective Abuse

Where an adult discloses retrospective abuse, and a concern is identified that children may be at risk, even if the children are unidentified, the staff member must follow the HSE Reporting Procedure and report the allegation to Tusla. The adult who has disclosed past abuse should be informed in advance that a report is being made and the process should be explained to them.

The welfare of the child is paramount and while steps also need to be taken to secure the welfare of any vulnerable adult, reporting such concerns to Tusla should be made as soon as practicable.