

## Press Release

### **Tusla and the Irish Foster Care Association launch findings of a joint consultation with social workers and foster carers**

**14 July 2017.** Tusla – Child and Family Agency and the Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA), the representative body for foster care in Ireland, today launched the findings of a joint consultation with foster carers and social workers across the country.

The consultation brought together 300 foster carers and social workers to discuss the challenges they face in foster care and suggest possible solutions to Tusla and IFCA. The report launched today highlights the experiences and concerns of foster carers and social workers, as well as their aspirations for foster care and the children they care for. The consultation found that:

- For 95% of foster carers, knowing they have helped a child or family in need is a reward of fostering
- 84% of foster carers feel appropriately or somewhat appropriately supported when seeking advice about a child who has experienced abuse
- 87% of social workers reported that they feel respected by the foster families with whom they work

Catherine Bond, IFCA CEO, said “We are delighted that this joint consultation between social workers and foster carers has taken place and that our members had an opportunity to share their insights and work collaboratively on suggestions to improve foster care for everyone. Their input will ensure that the voices of foster carers and the best interests of children in care will inform the development of Tusla’s Alternative Care Strategy. Their participation and engagement in this process is a clear expression of their commitment to improving fostering relationships and experiences for children and families.”

Speaking at the publication of the report, Cormac Quinlan, Director of Transformation and Policy, Tusla, said “We are delighted to have collaborated with IFCA on this joint project of consultation with foster carers and social workers. Our care system is built on the generosity of foster carers who open their homes to the almost 6,000 children in foster care and the social workers who support them to do so. Tusla is currently developing a new Alternative Care Strategy to enhance the current provision of services to children in care and the suggestions from this consultation will be central to this work.”

The consultation identified a number of suggestions to improve foster care services, many of which are currently being addressed by IFCA and Tusla. Steps currently being taken by the two organisations include:

- IFCA and Tusla are developing a joint protocol that will outline how the two organisations work together to best effect for the promotion of excellence in foster care;
- IFCA has produced a comprehensive guide on dealing with complaints and allegations to provide clarity, information and guidance on this topic. Information sessions are also being provided nationally by IFCA;
- IFCA is creating an online resource library which will provide a range of accessible resources on topics of interest in foster care;
- Tusla is developing a new Alternative Care Strategy to improve our services for children in care. Its aim is to strengthen preventative strategies to support young

people to remain safely at home; to explore and develop a range of care placements; and to further enhance the provision of support to young people in aftercare;

- Tusla has developed a National Child Care Information System (NCCIS), which is being rolled out on a phased basis and is expected to be fully operational by the end of next year. NCCIS is now live in two areas;
- Tusla is currently laying the foundations for an extension of after-hours and out-of-hours services. This service will be extended to include foster care and Tusla has committed to the establishment of this nationally in 2017.

Ms Bond and Mr Quinlan concluded “This consultation was invaluable in that it gave an open forum to people on the front line of foster care in Ireland and allowed us to hear their needs and concerns. We would like to thank all the 300 social workers and foster carers who took the time to contribute to this consultation process and report.”

You can access the report [here](#) and a short animation [here](#)

## **ENDS**

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About the consultation**

The consultation was conducted on behalf of Tusla and IFCA by Quality Matters, a charity established to support improvement in social services. It involved over 60 hours of conversation with over 300 foster carers, social workers and management staff across the country. The process began in 2015 with desktop research and a survey on experiences of working in alternative care. Regional consultations with social workers and foster carers were then held to understand the experiences of foster care and to identify areas where services could be improved.

### **About IFCA**

The Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA) founded in 1981 is the representative body for foster care in Ireland. Child-centered and rights-based, IFCA promotes excellence in foster care for all those involved. IFCA’s membership is broad based and includes foster and relative carers, social workers, child care workers, academics and others with an interest in or who are involved in foster care. IFCA has over 1,600 members and provides a range of supports to those who are directly involved in or who have an interest in foster care.

### **About Tusla – Child and Family Agency**

Tusla – Child and Family Agency was established on the 1st January 2014 and is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. It represents the most comprehensive reform of child protection, early intervention and family support services ever undertaken in Ireland. It is an ambitious move which brings together some 4,000 staff and an operational budget of over €600 million.