

Appendix B:

Extract from https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf
Chapter 2, pages 11-13.

Circumstances which may make children more vulnerable to harm

If you are dealing with children, you need to be alert to the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to children you come in contact with. A child needs to have someone they can trust in order to feel able to disclose abuse they may be experiencing. They need to know that they will be believed and will get the help they need. Without these things, they may be vulnerable to continuing abuse.

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse than others. Also, there may be particular times or circumstances when a child may be more vulnerable to abuse in their lives. In particular, children with disabilities, children with communication difficulties, children in care or living away from home, or children with a parent or parents with problems in their own lives may be more susceptible to harm.

The following list is intended to help you identify the range of issues in a child's life that may place them at greater risk of abuse or neglect. **It is important for you to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.**

- Parent or carer factors:
 - » Drug and alcohol misuse
 - » Addiction, including gambling
 - » Mental health issues
 - » Parental disability issues, including learning or intellectual disability
 - » Conflictual relationships
 - » Domestic violence
 - » Adolescent parents

- Child factors:
 - » Age
 - » Gender
 - » Sexuality
 - » Disability

- » Mental health issues, including self-harm and suicide
 - » Communication difficulties
 - » Trafficked/Exploited
 - » Previous abuse
 - » Young carer
- Community factors:
 - » Cultural, ethnic, religious or faith-based norms in the family or community which may not meet the standards of child welfare or protection required in this jurisdiction
 - » Culture-specific practices, including:
 - Female genital mutilation
 - Forced marriage
 - Honour-based violence
 - Radicalisation
 - Environmental factors:
 - » Housing issues
 - » Children who are out of home and not living with their parents, whether temporarily or permanently
 - » Poverty/Begging
 - » Bullying
 - » Internet and social media-related concerns
 - Poor motivation or willingness of parents/guardians to engage:
 - » Non-attendance at appointments
 - » Lack of insight or understanding of how the child is being affected
 - » Lack of understanding about what needs to happen to bring about change
 - » Avoidance of contact and reluctance to work with services
 - » Inability or unwillingness to comply with agreed plans

You should consider these factors as part of being alert to the possibility that a child may be at risk of suffering abuse and in bringing reasonable concerns to the attention of Tusla.

BULLYING

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare.

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

Bullying in schools is a particular problem due to the fact that children spend a significant portion of their time there and are in large social groups. In the first instance, the school authorities are responsible for dealing with such bullying. School management boards must have a code of behaviour and an anti bullying policy in place. If you are a staff member of a school, you should also be aware of your school's anti-bullying policy and of the relevant guidelines on how it is handled.

In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.