



THE COMMUNICATION

Background Document to
the Development of the
Glance Card

COGS



OUR RATIONALE:

The rationale for developing the glance card was to create a resource that was easy to access in hard copy or digital form, usable during an active conversation or for reflection from time to time. The group wanted to create a simple document that could be quickly glanced at to support communication. The window of opportunity for communication may be small, and every contact matters. Not being listened to can lead to mistrust and, in turn, impact present and future relationships.

OUR AIM:

To create an easy-to-use resource that highlights, recognises, and addresses communication and its role in building, forming and retaining relationships with families, external agencies and within TUSLA.

OBJECTIVES:



Highlight current challenges in terms of communicating with families, external agencies and internally within TUSLA.



Create a resource to support, reflect on, and develop skills to support communication.



Create a resource that allows for open discussion and, in turn, impacts on care, respect and strengthened relationships.



Development Stages of the Glance Card:

To get views across all the pillars and different people using our services, the group agreed to talk to the following people informally:

- ⚙️ Education/Schools
- ⚙️ Foster Carers
- ⚙️ Child Protection Social Workers
- ⚙️ Other Social Workers
- ⚙️ Men/Fathers
- ⚙️ Family Resource Centres
- ⚙️ Private Fostering Agency professionals
- ⚙️ Barnardos
- ⚙️ CAMHS
- ⚙️ CDNT
- ⚙️ Parents
- ⚙️ Children
- ⚙️ Guardians ad Litem (GAL)



Reflection Document

The following reflective questions guided the group. They did not record information at the time, but reflected on it afterwards and inserted it into the table below. This was not a formal interview process but a discussion that was reflected upon for the purpose of creating the glance card.

1. What was their first experience of dealing with TUSLA (use keywords)?

2. How they felt about TUSLA language used during meetings/communication?

3. When they talked to their TUSLA worker, did they feel listened to?

4. Did they feel they were included in the decision-making process for children?

5. How did they describe working with TUSLA?

6. What was their experience of the practicalities of working with TUSLA – times of meetings, locations of meetings, etc?

A Glimpse Of What Was Shared

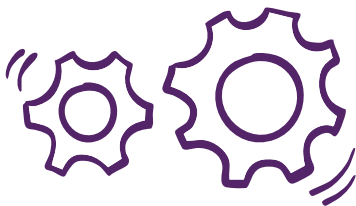
"It can be frustrating due to the movement on and off cases. One person works with a family and things are going well and then they're moved on. The consistency is challenging in those times."

"Very difficult for families – disconnected from community, lots of acronyms and the different layers within TUSLA."

"Jargon gets in way of facilitation. TUSLA can use jargon at times and can be confusing, misleading, very distant and clinical."

"It is always ever one sided, never know the actions from TUSLA's end (not informing those working in the community who are supporting the family)."

"Overall, I feel that TUSLA has over the years become less accessible, less communicative and more overworked. Delays in social workers being allocated to families is very frustrating."



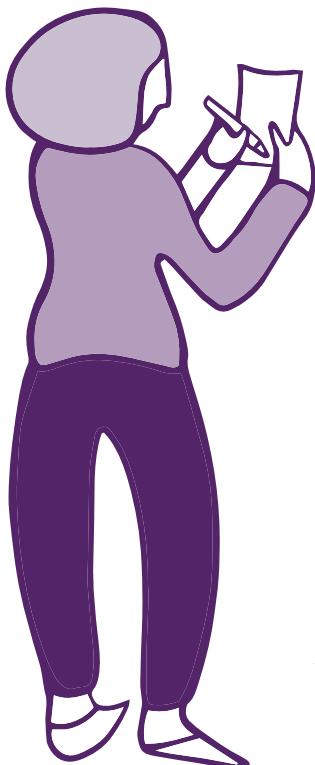
"There are many families who do not quite meet child protection criteria but still need supportive social work because Meitheal requires too much from them. The lack of practical, easily accessible family support is a MASSIVE problem in my opinion."

"We jointly put in child protection concerns with 2 others agencies as we were very worried and noticed Social Work response to agencies collaboratively naming concerns was taking very seriously. It made it stronger."

"I have to stress also that I have dealt with many social workers who were excellent at their job and great to deal with."

"Always positive with PPFS – can never recall a negative experience."

"COMHAR process is amazing – no duplication or over lapping and will listen if a referral is not appropriate for the service. COMHAR should be a national process to support referral pathways."



Final Glance Card

Themes that emerged from the reflective conversations were documented and were central to the development of the glance card. The glance card covers the following areas:

- 1. Sensitive Communication**
- 2. Cultural Competence**
- 3. Power Dynamics**
- 4. Trust and Connection**
- 5. Physical Environment**

Within each card, there is a short introductory text, a section on what we need to be, a section on things to consider, and a practical example, as shown below.



Recommendations for using the Glance Card

Have the spiral-bound copy at an accessible place on your desk or have a digital version easy to find on your device (laptop, desktop, phone, etc.).

Be familiar with the information and advice within the glance card.

Part of induction packs, practice team meetings, and supervision to embed and enhance communication and collaboration with staff from induction.

Maintain a feedback loop with children, families, practitioners and external agencies to refine resources over time.

Example Glance Card

SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION Glance card

Collaborating with families through respectful, empathetic communication fosters trust, supports shared decision-making, and enables respectful dialogue to improve outcomes.



We need to be:

- Clear, simple and understandable.
- Respectful.
- Considerate.

Things to consider:

- Am I aware of how the person is feeling and what is happening in their life?
- Have I been clear, simple, and can families understand what I am saying?
- Do I need an interpreter?

Example:

Someone not understanding or feeling heard within a conversation because of the use of professional language.

The Communication Cogs and TARA

TARA has six practice dimensions to support practice wisdom, theory and research into concrete practice changes. The Communication Cogs Glance Card initiative integrated the TARA practice dimensions within the glance card, with a particular focus on understanding lived experience, relational safety, and building collaboration.



Glossary of Terms used within document:

- TUSLA is the Child and Family Agency in Ireland.
- PPFS is the Prevention Partnership and Family Support service within TUSLA.
- Meitheal is a national practice model to ensure that the needs and strengths of children and their families are effectively identified, understood and responded to in a timely way so that children and families get the help and support needed to improve children's outcomes and to realise their rights.
- Comhar is a process where Social Work meet monthly with PPFS & Tusla Funded Agencies.
- The Communication Cogs is the name of the group that developed the glance card made up of TUSLA practitioners from different teams as part of the TARA Project.
- The TARA Project is a cooperative project between University College Cork and Dublin South Central Integrated Service Area, of TUSLA.
- CAMHS stands for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.
- CDNT stands for Children's Disability Network Team.
- A Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is a court-appointed advocate responsible for representing the best interests of a child within legal proceedings.
- Barnardos is a children's charity in Ireland that focuses on protecting and supporting children and young people in need.

Links to TARA Practice Tools

Lotty, M. (2023). TARA Practice Model (Trauma, Attachment, Resilience into Action). Zenodo. Available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/11395102>

O'Donoghue, M. (2025). TARA - Our Language Reconsidered. Zenodo. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15344784>

Supporting Documentation

Brooks, L.A., Manias, E. and Bloomer, M.J. (2019) 'Culturally sensitive communication in healthcare: A concept analysis', *Collegian*, 26(3), pp. 383–391. Available at: <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ucc.idm.oclc.org/science/article/pii/S1322769617303153>

Carpenter-Song, E.A., Nordquest Schwallie, M. and Longhofer, J. (2007) 'Cultural competence reexamined: critique and directions for the future', *Psychiatric Services* (Washington, D.C.), 58(10), pp. 1362–1365. Available at: <https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/ps.2007.58.10.1362>

Scottish Government (2021) Trauma-Informed Practice: A Toolkit for Scotland. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/03/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland/documents/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland/govscot%3Adocument/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland.pdf>

Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014) SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. Available at: https://www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/wp-content/uploads/samhsa_trauma_concept_paper.pdf

Acknowledgements

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