



**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

# Report of a Children's Residential Centre

Name of provider:	The Child and Family Agency
Tusla Region:	Dublin North East
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	9 - 10 March 2021
Centre ID:	OSV 0004179
Fieldwork ID	MON 0032074

## About the centre

The following information has been submitted by the centre and describes the service they provide.

The centre was a community-based residential centre run by the Child and Family Agency, Tusla. It was located in the north east of the country near a large town. The centre offered short-to-long-term therapeutic respite placements and an outreach service to boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 17 years old. The centre could accommodate four children at a time, providing a service for a total of up to fifteen children on a respite basis. The service would take children under the age of 12 years old and their placement would be governed by the Tusla policy for placement of children 12 years and under.

The children either live at home or with a foster family and the aim of the service is to maintain those living arrangements by providing support from staff and positive time away. The service adopted a resilience-based approach to care which encompassed the child's physical, emotional, social, cultural, spiritual and educational needs. The approach was based on a philosophical theory which focused on a child's need for belonging, generosity, mastery and independence.

The goal of the respite service was to keep families together by providing a comprehensive support structure to sustain the child's living arrangements. The centre staff worked closely with children and their families to assist children to meet their full potential and enhance their coping mechanisms. The centre aimed to support the holistic development of the child in a homely, stable and secure environment showing compassion and respect for the child.

Number of children on the date of inspection:

4

## How we inspect

To prepare for this inspection the inspector or inspectors reviewed all information about this centre. This included any previous inspection findings and information received since the last inspection.

As part of our inspection, where possible, we:

- speak with children and the people who visit them to find out their experience of the service
- talk to staff and management to find out how they plan, deliver and monitor the care and support services that are provided to children who live in the centre
- observe practice and daily life to see if it reflects what people tell us
- review documents to see if appropriate records are kept and that they reflect practice and what people tell us.

For this inspection the inspector spoke with four children, four parents and foster carers, two staff, the centre manager, the deputy centre manager, the Alternative Care Manager and the Regional Manager for Children Residential Services for Dublin North East region.

In order to summarize our inspection findings and to describe how well a service is doing, we group and report on the standards and related regulations under two dimensions:

### **1. Capacity and capability of the service:**

This section describes the leadership and management of the centre and how effective it is in ensuring that a good quality and safe service is being provided. It outlines how people who work in the centre are recruited and trained and whether there are appropriate systems and processes in place to underpin the safe delivery and oversight of the service.

### **2. Quality and safety of the service:**

This section describes the care and support children receive and if it was of a good quality and ensured people were safe. It includes information about the care and supports available for people and the environment in which they live.

A full list of all standards and the dimension they are reported under can be seen in Appendix 1.

**This inspection was carried out remotely during the following times:**

Date	Times of inspection	Inspector	Role
09 March 2021	9:00hrs to 17.00hrs	Grace Lynam	Inspector
10 March 2021	9:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Grace Lynam	Inspector

## What children told us

Feedback provided to the inspector about the centre presented a picture of a happy, fun place to be where children and staff alike enjoyed their time together. The centre supported children and their families to ensure their current living arrangements were maintained. Children's individuality was respected and their rights were promoted and facilitated. Everyone worked in partnership in the best interests of the child and this ensured an increased sense of confidence and security for the children. Children's views were sought, listened to and acted upon, thereby ensuring that children knew their views were valued.

The inspector spoke on the telephone with four children who were availing of a respite break over the course of the inspection. They were all very positive about the staff and what it meant to them to be able to go to the centre for respite breaks. Some comments by children included that it was a "nice place" and that the centre was friendly, loving, homely and comfortable and where you "felt welcome". They also described how they felt a "little nervous" at first when going to the centre, but got used to it as they attended more.

Being able to go to the centre for respite breaks helped the children. They all enjoyed going to the centre and agreed it was fun there. Their comments included "it's a brilliant service" that is "like a big family" and that they "appreciate the service, and highly recommend the service to any young person". One child liked the routine that the centre provided for them. Another said it was the "light" they needed when they were in a "dark place" and another that it "gave them a break".

The children spoke positively about the staff team. One child said that the staff "care about us all" and "they listen" and they are "caring, kind and generous". Another said they liked it there and that the staff "look after me" and tell me "there's not anything to worry about" and that "its really fun to come to". They said the "staff are good at minding the children". Children also described having a "good relationship with staff" and that the advice they gave "sticks with you".

Children told the inspector that if they needed something they could ask and would get it and gave examples of how staff had advocated for and promoted their rights. Some of the children had attended a children's meeting and confirmed that staff listened to their views and ideas and acted on them. One example of this was the creation of a colourful courtyard area in the garden that the children created with assistance from staff.

Children described to the inspector how the staff supervised them to learn skills such as cooking, stating, "I like when I bake". They also enjoyed fun activities such as going for walks, art and making a fairy garden last year. The activities the children had been involved in included making care packages for distribution in a local nursing home at Christmas time. Everyone had contributed and it had been "amazing" and had an impact on the elderly. There was also a monthly theme for the children to work on as part of a Tusla participation award - "Minding your mental health" was the theme for the month of the inspection. The children were very involved in researching and creatively presenting information in an accessible format for all the children to read and learn about the topic.

The children told the inspector that they felt safe and well cared for. It's a secure place and you're "never lost" was how one child expressed it.

None of the children could think of any way the centre could do anything better, and none of the children who spoke with the inspector had reason to make a complaint. Children received a booklet containing all the information they needed about the centre, and were aware that there were records kept about them. They said they had read some of their daily log books, but not their file.

The inspector spoke with four parents and foster carers of the children availing of the respite service provided by the centre. From these discussions it was clear that the centre was fulfilling its aim of maintaining children in their homes. Families were all very happy with the service and felt supported in their care of the child. They appreciated the break that respite afforded them as it gave them "breathing space", a "mental break" as well as providing "wind-down time" for the child. Parents and carers described a high standard of care where every child was treated as an individual, and their care was based on each child's particular needs. They described an accessible and reliable staff team that cared about them too as the child's parent or carer.

Staff were attentive to the children's needs and sensitive to the carer's worries. Parents and foster carers told the inspector that staff were "on the same page" and that they worked together to ensure the children got what they needed. They were of the view that the staff team went above and beyond the call of duty and did it "with a smile". Parents and carers told the inspector how children had benefitted from respite, and said that they had made "immense progress" and "growing in confidence" as a result. The routine provided by respite was cited as beneficial to children also. There was a consensus that the children loved attending and were happy to go for respite breaks. They felt that children were safe and well cared for in the centre by a caring staff team that knew them very well, and were encouraging and reassuring when children had any difficulties. None of the parents

and foster carers could suggest any improvements for the service. One parent described it as a "home from home".

The inspector spoke with social workers or social work team leaders who had placed children in the centre. They told the inspector that the centre gave a valuable service which provided significant support to children and their families. Social workers spoke highly about the staff team in the centre and what they had achieved with the children during their respite breaks. They gave examples of how the staff team had helped children develop in confidence and learn to trust, how they had engaged with their families to support them, and how this had, in turn, ensured that their living arrangements had been maintained. Social workers told inspectors that the staff team provided individualised, child-centred care and worked with them to ensure each child's needs were met, including their need for emotional support. They said that the staff team engaged in promoting children's rights and advocating for them when necessary. For example, where additional services were required they advocated for these services to be provided. Social workers told the inspector that staff planned individual work with the children using their model of care, and taking time to consider the child's particular needs. They were satisfied that the staff team promoted the child's safety and wellbeing in their everyday work, and treated children with respect and dignity in all their interventions with them.

In summary, the centre was portrayed as a pleasant place for children where good quality care was provided. The centre was described by all who participated in this inspection as effective at supporting children to remain in their home or placement, where the staff team worked closely and in partnership with families and professionals alike, to ensure the best outcomes for the children in their care.

## Capacity and capability

There were effective management systems in place in the centre which ensured good quality respite care was provided to the children. The centre was well run and adequately resourced. The management structure was clearly defined and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities, but formal training was required for managers. Individualised child-centred care was provided by a competent team in a manner which respected and promoted children's rights and ensured the best outcomes for them.

The service provided in the centre reflected a child-centred approach where the focus was on the child and working in partnership with their families and professionals involved with them. This approach ensured that children and their

families derived positive outcomes from receiving the service, ultimately ensuring that these family units remained together.

The centre was last inspected in April 2018. At that time, of seven standards inspected against, six were compliant or substantially compliant and one was non-compliant moderate. These included children's rights, planning for and care of children safeguarding and child protection, premises, purpose and function and management and staffing. Deficits identified in the last inspection had been addressed.

This inspection found that the centre was well managed and this ensured that children received the best possible care. The centre performed its functions in line with the legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect and promote the welfare of children, relating to the areas covered by the inspection. Staff demonstrated an understanding of the relevant legislation and standards appropriate to their role and reflected this in their practice. In addition, staff reviewed new legislation and policies to identify any gaps in practice and make improvements in compliance. There were good communication systems to support communication to and from management and staff. Staff and managers described the various meetings that took place to ensure information was discussed and shared. These included management meetings and staff team and handover meetings. Staff also used various diaries and logs to record important information about the daily activities of the children to ensure all staff were aware of the arrangements for the child's care. All staff agreed that clear and regular communication was crucial during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and communication systems had been effective at keeping staff informed of changes to policy and practice. The inspector reviewed the minutes of team meetings and management meetings and found this to be the case.

Tusla had developed a suite of national policies and procedures for its residential services and there was a plan in place for their full implementation by April 2021. Staff confirmed that they had received briefings and or completed an e-learning module on the first two sets of these new policies.

The centre was well led with a strong management team in place at all levels, providing leadership within a culture open to learning and continuous improvement. There were clearly defined governance arrangements in place that were understood by staff. Staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities and decision-making was clear to everyone. The centre manager was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the centre and they were supported by a deputy centre manager. Both were accessible to staff and the children and provided oversight of the service on a daily basis. Since the introduction of the restrictions for the COVID-19 pandemic the



centre manager and her deputy attended the centre an alternate days. The deputy centre manager deputised for the manager, as required.

Staff described a culture of learning and development in the centre where staff reflected on their practice to ensure the best care was provided to each child. This was borne out in records of staff meetings where the plans for children's care were discussed, agreed and actions assigned to a staff member. Staff were clear about all their responsibilities including those in relation to health and safety, risk management, medication management, all aspects of care delivery and especially special measures in relation to COVID-19. These were standing items on meeting agendas, both at team and management level.

There was a risk management system in place to identify, assess and manage risk and this was regularly reviewed to ensure risk was minimised to the greatest extent. Risks could be escalated to the Regional Director, and in turn, to the National Director, through formal process called the *Need To Know* notification system. There were no risks about this centre escalated to the regional director at the time of the inspection.

The centre had a statement of purpose and function that accurately described the service provided, as was confirmed by the comments of children, families and social workers alike. The statement of purpose and function contained all the information required by the standard describing the day-to-day operation of the centre and the policies underpinning practice. It described the model of care practised in the centre and the philosophy on which it was based. There was a lovely colourful version of the statement of purpose for children. This document had been developed with children who had used the service, and it was included in the induction pack children received on introduction to the service. It was also displayed in a prominent position in the centre. Staff described the model of care to the inspector and explained how they used it to assess a child's needs and to develop individual plans to help the child progress in the areas identified. The staff team were successful at implementing the model of care to the benefit of the children who came to the centre for respite breaks.

The safety and quality of the care provided was continually assessed to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. There was a schedule of audits in place to ensure that the centre's compliance with every standard was assessed, at a minimum, on an annual basis. Additional audits were completed in relation to a whole range of areas, including audits on the records maintained on children, supervision of staff, health and safety, risk management, healthcare and the young people's register. When deficits were identified, actions were identified to address the issue and these were communicated to the staff team for action. Tusla's quality assurance directorate completed a report on the centre in December 2020 under the

well led quality principle and identified only one action, which was completed. There were no actions identified regarding the safety of the service.

The centre implemented Tusla's "Tell Us" complaints process. Information about how to make a complaint was provided to children as part of their introduction to the centre and was re-visited in individual sessions with the children throughout their time in the centre. One child had been supported by staff to make a complaint in the six months prior to the inspection and it had been satisfactorily resolved.

There were sufficient numbers of competent, experienced staff working in the centre. The centre was fully staffed and there were no vacancies. The centre did not use the services of agency staff but there was a provision in place should this be required. The staff team comprised a centre manager, a deputy centre manager, four social care leaders, eight social care workers and two relief staff. The team worked 12 hour shifts which included "live" nights (staff on duty throughout the night). There were 2 staff working each shift in addition to a manager onsite from Monday to Friday. There was a formal on-call system in place to ensure there was management cover at all times. There was a stable staff team in place with a variety of skills and experience; some team members had up to 20 years experience in social care. There were no issues with staff retention and staff reported to being very happy in the centre and fulfilled in their roles. This ensured continuity of care for the children who came to the centre. Staff at every level of the organisation felt supported by their managers in the performance of their duties. Managers were accessible, both informally and formally through staff supervision, team and management meetings.

Contingency workforce planning was put in place when the COVID-19 restrictions were initially introduced. Contingency plans ensured that the minimum number of staff were on site and they were organised in groups so that, if needed, they could provide additional cover for shifts. The centre manager and the deputy manager attended the centre on alternate days, working remotely the other days. This was a good use of resources during restrictions, was effectively an infection prevention measure and ensured availability of management to the staff team.

The regional manager held responsibility for ensuring that staff were recruited in line with legislation and he told the inspector that there was a robust recruitment system in place which only processed new applicants when all the necessary documentation was submitted. This system was being further developed so that centre managers had access to the digital staff recruitment record of their staff members. The regional manager was clear about his responsibility to recruit staff with the necessary qualifications, competencies and skills to provide quality care in the respite centre. The inspector reviewed a sample of four staff files and found that qualifications were not held on file for two staff. Staff had written job descriptions

and the staff that the inspector spoke with were very clear about their roles and responsibilities. There was a written code of conduct for all staff which they told inspectors they adhered to in the course of their work with children. Although the centre manager was experienced and skilled in their role, they did not have formal management training.

**Standard 5.1**

The registered provider ensures that the residential centre performs its functions as outlined in relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect and promote the welfare of each child.

**Regulation 5: Care practices and operational policies**

The centre operated in compliance with relevant regulatory requirements and national standards. A full suite of up-to-date national policies for children’s residential centres was currently being rolled out, along with a programme of training for all staff.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 5.2**

The registered provider ensures that the residential centre has effective leadership, governance and management arrangements in place with clear lines of accountability to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.

The centre was well run and management provided good leadership to the staff team. There was a clear management structure in place that supported a competent and confident staff team, thereby ensuring a sustainable provision of child centred and individualised respite care.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 5.3**

The residential centre has a publicly available statement of purpose that accurately and clearly describes the services provided.

The centre's statement of purpose and function clearly described the model of service delivered in the centre. It also described the organisational structure and the management and staff employed in the service.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 5.4**

The registered provider ensures that the residential centre strives to continually improve the safety and quality of the care and support provided to achieve better outcomes for children.

The management team was committed to continuous quality improvement with a programme of regular audits in place. The centre operated in a culture of learning and development.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 6.1**

The registered provider plans, organises and manages the workforce to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.

**Regulation 6: Staffing**

The centre was fully resourced with a confident and competent workforce who felt supported in their work. There was a stable staff team in place which ensured continuity of care to children. Contingency planning was in place to ensure sufficient numbers of staff were available to provide care for children, should it be required.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 6.2**

The registered provider recruits people with the required competencies to manage and deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.

The centre was staffed by a competent and experienced workforce. Although staff were qualified, there was no evidence of qualifications for two members of staff on their file. The centre manager had not received formal management training.

Judgment: Substantially Compliant

## Quality and Safety

Children received good quality care in which their needs were prioritised. Their opinions were listened to and valued and the care they received provided stability in their lives and individually enhanced their confidence. Their rights were supported and promoted and their diversity celebrated. Care was provided in partnership with carers and professionals involved with them.

Staff in the centre presented as child centred in their approach and they described the child as being at the heart of what they do. They were familiar with children's rights and practiced a rights-based approach in their daily work. Children gave the inspector examples of how staff had promoted their rights and social workers confirmed this in interviews. Children were given information about their rights in the child-friendly leaflet they were given on the centre. They also got an induction pack before they first came to stay there. This included information on the records maintained about them in the centre, advocacy was explained to them and their personal preferences about food, hobbies and interests were recorded. Children also received a child-friendly version of the centre's statement of purpose, explaining the work of the centre and the care they hoped to provide to the child. Children were given information about external supports and services that might help them, including advocacy services who, in pre-COVID-19 times, had visited the centre in person, but who were now doing remote video calls to the children. Information about the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres was included in the centre's booklet.

Staff promoted cultural diversity and equality. The centre provided individualised care to a diverse group of children and all were treated with dignity and respect. Families reported that staff went above and beyond their duties in providing respite care to their child and also that they themselves felt cared for and supported by the staff team. Staff were proactive in meeting the needs of the children and their families.

It was clear to the inspector from speaking with the children that they were treated with dignity and respect by the staff team. One child told the inspector that information on the UN Convention was displayed in the centre. Without exception, everyone the inspector spoke with agreed that the children's needs while in the centre were met and that the staff respected and acted on the views and opinions expressed by the children. The centre maintained a record of the children's care.

Staff explained to the inspector how they encouraged and facilitated children to understand the complaints process and gave an example of this in practice. Children's needs were met with attention to detail that mattered to them. For example, when children were vegetarian their food preferences were facilitated. Children were involved in activities that reflected their interests and hobbies. Children made baked goods which they brought home to share

with their families. This gave them a sense of pride and achievement which was shared by the staff.

Children's opinions were valued and staff recognised the value of getting to know the children and their families so that they could support families in their care of the child. Individual work was completed with children based on discussions and plans agreed at staff meetings. Children's meetings were regularly held where they were asked their views on improving the service and how it could better meet their needs. Children were involved in the actions that were decided on to progress the improvements they suggested. These included, for example, the creation of a dedicated make-up area in the house, and an outdoor courtyard area in the garden. Children were also supported and encouraged to take part in a Tusla participation project and the children had been successful and the centre had achieved an award for their efforts.

**Standard 1.1**

Each child experiences care and support which respects their diversity and protects their rights in line with the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Regulation 10: Religion**

**Regulation 4: Welfare of child**

Residents' needs were assessed and their care plans were person-centred and clearly informed the supports and care they needed. Care plans were developed and regularly reviewed in consultation with residents or where appropriate with their family.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 1.4**

Each child has access to information, provided in an accessible format that takes account of their communication needs.

Information was provided to children in child-friendly formats. Children were given information that was relevant to their needs and interests including advocacy and support services.

Judgment: Compliant

## Appendix 1 - Full list of standards considered under each dimension

Standard Title	Judgment
<b>Capacity and capability</b>	
<b>Standard 5.1</b> The registered provider ensures that the residential centre performs its functions as outlined in relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect and promote the welfare of each child.	Compliant
<b>Standard 5.2</b> The registered provider ensures that the residential centre has effective leadership, governance and management arrangements in place with clear lines of accountability to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.	Compliant
<b>Standard 5.3</b> The residential centre has a publicly available statement of purpose that accurately and clearly describes the services provided.	Compliant
<b>Standard 5.4</b> The registered provider ensures that the residential centre strives to continually improve the safety and quality of the care and support provided to achieve better outcomes for children.	Compliant
<b>Standard 6.1</b> The registered provider plans, organises and manages the workforce to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.	Compliant
<b>Standard 6.2</b> The registered provider recruits people with the required competencies to manage and deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.	Substantially Compliant
<b>Quality and safety</b>	
<b>Standard 1.1</b> Each child experiences care and support which respects their diversity and protects their rights in line with the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.	Compliant
<b>Standard 1.4</b> Each child has access to information, provided in an accessible format that takes account of their communication needs	Compliant