



**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:	West
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	15 – 16 November 2021
Centre ID:	OSV-0004202
Fieldwork ID	MON-0033746

About the centre

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

The centre provided a mainstream community-based children's residential centre managed by (Tusla) the Child and Family Agency, Children's Residential Services, West region. The centre provided individual semi-independent living accommodation which incorporated 24/7 staffing support and a life and social skills programme. Specific to the centre's purpose was that the young person required a service that would support them in preparing for leaving care and being able to live post discharge in a less supportive environment.

The centre was a newly refurbished building located on the outskirts of Limerick city with good amenities and access to public transport. The accommodation comprised of four single occupancy, self-contained apartments over four floors. The centre provided care for up to four young people both male and female, between the ages of 16 and 18 years. The young people needed medium to long-term residential care, and were referred to the centre through the central referrals committee of Tusla's West region.

The aim of the centre was to provide young people between the ages of 16-18 years with a safe, stable and supportive living environment from which they were given opportunities to prepare themselves for the transition from care, the move to a less supported living environment and the responsibilities that come with leaving care and adulthood.

The objective of the centre was to ensure that the care practice was always young person-centred, maintaining a needs-led multidisciplinary approach to looking after the young people in their care, while complying with the requirements of the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres 2018 and the Childcare (Placement of Children in Residential Care) Regulations, 1995. The centre's model of therapeutic care was rooted within Tusla's nationally approved framework for delivering improvements in young people's wellbeing and outcomes.

The centre's aim was to provide high-quality, person-centred care to all young people in accordance with evidence-based best practice; to ensure young people lived in a comfortable, clean and safe environment that promoted their wellbeing, health, education, rights and independence. The central task of the centre was to help young people realise their full potential so as to assist them to live independently.

The following information outlines some additional data of this centre.

Number of children on the date of inspection:	2
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How we inspect

To prepare for this inspection the inspector 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.

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 during the following times:

Date	Times of inspection	Inspector	Role
15 November 2021	10:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Olivia O'Connell	Lead Inspector
16 November 2021	08:00hrs to 16:00hrs	Olivia O'Connell Sue Talbot	Lead Inspector Support Inspector

What children told us and what inspectors observed

Two young people were living in the centre at the time of the inspection. The centre had recently re-located to their permanent premises, further to refurbishments being completed.

The centre supported young people and their families to keep in contact. Young people's individuality was respected and their rights were promoted. The staff team, families and external professionals worked in partnership in the best interests of each of the young people and this ensured an increased sense of security and quality of life for the young people. Young people's views were sought, listened to and acted upon, thereby ensuring that young people knew their views were valued and wherever possible, what mattered most to them was promoted.

All young people had their own apartment which had been individually decorated. The centre was a four storey building, with an apartment on each floor. At the time of the inspection, one young person resided on the ground floor, while another resided on the first floor. Each apartment had a kitchen/sitting room area, bedroom and ensuite bathroom. The centre was newly refurbished, and was bright and nicely decorated. On a walk around the premises, the inspector could see that there was ample private space; equipment purchased for the centre was appropriate and accessible. Although there was limited communal space for recreational facilities, young people could access a shared kitchen, den and back garden.

The inspector spoke with one young person living in the centre. They told the inspector that they were well cared for and felt safe. They loved having their own apartment and felt well supported by staff. The inspector observed how staff and young people engaged with each other in an open and relaxed manner that seemed to foster positive relationships. Young people had appropriate access to all areas of the centre and could leave the centre unimpeded. The observed levels of staff supervision of young people were responsive and appropriate to their needs.

The inspector spoke with young people's family members who said that they felt the young people were safe and well looked after by staff at the centre. They also described staff as respectful and supportive. They spoke of good communication with staff and told inspectors that they would be informed if there were any concerns related to the young people.

The inspector also spoke with a social worker and a guardian ad litem (GAL). They experienced the centre as providing a valuable service which included significant support to young people and their families. They spoke well of the staff team in the centre and

what they had achieved with young people in their care. They were of the view that the centre provided a good quality service to the young people living there. The social worker and the GAL felt that the programme of care in the centre met the individual needs of young people, and that the staff team provided a nurturing and caring environment for young people to develop and flourish. The centre communicated well with all involved and provided regular updates on young people's progress. All were satisfied that the staff team promoted the young person's safety and wellbeing in their everyday work, and treated young people with respect and dignity in all their interventions with them.

In summary, young people felt safe and well supported by what they described as a caring and responsive team. Everyone inspectors spoke to complimented the quality and levels of support given to young people placed there. This was reflected in the findings of this inspection. There was a general consensus that young people had benefited from a strong person-centred culture, within a clear structured and caring approach, delivered by an experienced, skilled and committed staff team. This was reflected in the findings of this inspection.

The next two sections of this report provide the findings of this inspection on the governance of the centre and how this impacted on the quality and safety of care provided to young people.

Capacity and capability

There were effective management systems in place in the centre which ensured good quality care was provided to young people. The centre was well run and adequately resourced. The management structure was clearly defined and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities. The centre was led by an experienced manager and deputy manager who maintained an active presence within the team. The centre manager reported to the deputy regional manager, who reported to the regional manager. The centre management and staff team demonstrated a high level of commitment to the care of the young people in what was at times an intense working environment. It was evident to the inspector that the level of vigilance required by staff to support the young people was responsive to their needs.

The centre was last inspected in March 2020. At that time all thirteen standards inspected were found to be compliant. This inspection found that the centre had maintained a well-managed service, providing good quality care to young people.

The centre had a statement of purpose and function that accurately described the service provided. 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 outlined the model of care practiced in the centre and the philosophy on which it was based. There was an adapted version of the statement of purpose that was provided to young people and their family. Families, centre staff and external professionals interviewed by inspectors were all familiar with the purpose and function of the centre, including their model of care.

The centre had a system in place for identifying and managing risks. The centre had a risk register system which recorded and tracked risks within the centre. There was a system in place for the notification of incidents, accidents and significant events through the NIMS system and in line with Tusla's national centralised notification system. The centre completed self-assessment audits as part of the quality improvement framework, and also completed regular internal audits in relation to the service provided in the centre. Actions from these audits were completed in a timely manner ensuring that young people living in the centre received person-centred care.

There were competent and experienced staff working in the centre. At the time of inspection there were 2.5 vacant posts. A decision had been made at regional level to maintain the occupancy level, so as to ensure safe and effective practice. The centre manager and deputy manager were assured however that they had appropriate staffing levels to meet the needs of young people currently in the centre. This was also a finding of this inspection.

The centre manager told inspectors that they were actively trying to recruit new staff, but that this had been challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, links with local colleges were being re-established and there was also a national recruitment drive for children's residential centres within Tusla being developed. The centre was staffed with a stable team, including two agency staff to cover leave. The care provided to the young people in the centre was consistent and meaningful. Staff and management were knowledgeable and experienced in responding appropriately to complex behaviours by the young people in their care.

A staff rota was in place to ensure the needs of the service and young people were being met. Staff told inspectors that they felt well supported while on shift, by both colleagues and managers. The centre had a good mix of experienced and recently qualified staff; who had a wide range of skills, whose capacity and work practices responded flexibly to the individual needs of the young people to promote the safe running of the centre. However, the appointment of new staff to the 2.5 social care worker vacant posts had taken a long time to progress, and the centre relied on the use of agency staff whilst these posts could be appointed to.

The manager operated an on-call system with other centre managers in the region so as to always be available to staff where required. Staff told inspectors that balancing the needs of all the young people, particularly those with high levels of complexity, was at

times quite challenging. Staff and management were confident however that they had the necessary resources, skills, knowledge and experience to manage this complex environment; this was also a finding of this inspection.

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 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 management and staff team demonstrated a high level of commitment to the care of the young people in what was at times an intense working environment. Management and staff were knowledgeable and experienced in responding appropriately to all aspects of young people's care.

Judgment: Compliant

Quality and safety

Overall young people were supported and encouraged to have a good quality of life where their wishes and choices were considered. Inspectors found that the young people living in the centre received care and support which respected their diversity and promoted their rights. Care was provided in partnership with family members and other professionals involved with the young person. This person-centred care and support enhanced the wellbeing of the young people placed in the centre.

Managers and staff had a detailed understanding of the history of each young person and of risks to their safety and their vulnerability. The referral and admissions process was well managed, with appropriate support and care given in helping young people 'settle in'. Placement plans were effectively informed by multi-agency assessments; with good recognition of the complexity of each young person's needs. Young people's day-to-day care was well-managed; with careful attention given to building relationships of

trust with the young people; whilst promoting their independence, balanced with increasing their awareness of risky situations and how to keep themselves safe. The ethos of the centre was one of enabling young people to excel, to grow in confidence and know what is expected of them as they moved into young adulthood. Good attention was paid to helping young people to re-build their networks of support and to promote new links in their local community through a range of education, work experience and social activities.

Centre staff aimed to provide good quality, person-centred and safe care through developing individually tailored programmes of support, built around young people's strengths and needs. The inspector observed positive and warm relationships between staff and young people; positive relationships resulted in better communication between staff and young people and this was particularly important in problem solving and managing their behaviour. There was a good standard of care and appropriate interventions for young people, which enabled them to address past experiences and develop alternative skills and coping strategies. The centre worked collaboratively with other professionals to ensure these interventions were effective. Both young people living at the centre had an allocated social worker. Centre managers had close contact with young people's social workers in ensuring regular review of their care, safety and well-being. The focus on young people's health and development was holistic and recognised their emotional, sexual health, mental wellbeing and cognitive functioning. The centre staff actively sought and used the advice of specialist practitioners to inform each young person's individual programmes of care; and to assist them in recognising and taking on greater personal responsibility when they were ready and able to do so. Medication was well-managed; with attention given to its impact for the young person.

Up-to-date care plans were in place for one out of two young people. The other young person's care review meeting had only recently taken place, and the inspector was able to sample minutes of the most recent child in care review. Current care plans reviewed by the inspector were comprehensive, and set out each young person's individual needs and how those needs would be met.

Staff developed good quality placement plans which outlined how the young people's needs would be met in the centre. Placement support plans focussed on the day-to-day care and support to be provided. They were also comprehensive and regularly updated as required. Placement plans were reviewed on a regular basis in line with the model of care. Records of mentoring sessions demonstrated that staff undertook individual work with young people on issues such as self-care, sexual health, and safety on the internet. Staff reported regular contact with the young people's social workers, GALs, schools and health professionals. They actively supported them to have their voice heard in wider planning and decision-making forums. Links with the aftercare service were well-

developed in promoting joint discussions about the young person's wishes and future support needs.

The young people were encouraged and supported to become involved in leisure and social activities in the local area. Staff used mentoring sessions and young people's community meetings to explore individual areas of interest, and decide what activities the young people may like to get involved in. There had been recent activities organised, such as a trip to an amusement park.

Managers and staff supported young people to maintain contact with their families. The family link person within the mentoring team provided effective links with the young person's family in maintaining contact and keeping them informed of the young person's progress. Family members told inspectors that they were consulted by managers and staff, and involved in decision-making processes. The centre had appropriate private space to enable young people to have visitors, such as in their own apartments.

Young people's educational needs were outlined in care and placement plans. Staff supported young people to attend school, to complete state examinations and participate in further education or vocational training. One young person was attending a local training centre, while another was pursuing work place experience in an area of interest.

Both young people were 16 years of age. At the time of the inspection, one young person had been referred to the aftercare service and was awaiting a needs assessment. Young people were supported to develop skills for life, including cooking, budgeting and general self-care. They were encouraged to strengthen their sense of identity by developing links with their own communities and cultures. When young people identified specific areas of interest, they were encouraged to pursue them. This was evident in the support given to young people to avail of work placements and courses that provided them with certification. Inspectors found that care and placement planning was strong, with staff creativity encouraged. The journey of each young person clearly mapped from admission to leaving care. This additionally included time-limited outreach support as they transitioned to their new home.

Managers and staff were committed to the protection of the young people. Staff were trained in Children First (2017). There were a few gaps in relation to updated mandatory training with respect to Children First and First Aid. These had been clearly identified and were being addressed via e-learning programmes and face to face activities when public health measures allowed. A review of the child protection log showed that three child protection concerns had been reported since the beginning of 2021. Records showed that the centre manager followed up with the respective social work teams to find out the outcome of each assessment. At the time of the inspection, all three were closed. Risk assessments were a common feature of this centre in how it safeguarded children, and assessments reviewed by the inspector were found to be of good quality,

and important in informing decisions about risk. Staff told inspectors that any concerns they had could be raised in the team meeting forum and that the managers were very approachable in the event that they needed to raise any issues with them. In sampling minutes of team meetings the inspector observed progress in how team meetings were recorded and identified actions followed up on.

Managers and staff had well-developed systems for identifying and managing risk regarding young people in their care. Serious incidents including child protection notifications and missing from care episodes were well-managed, monitored and subject to regular review with the young person, their families, as appropriate, and with external partners. Learning from such incidents was strongly promoted through routine follow up with young people, debriefing of staff and practice discussions within supervision and team meetings. Staff were deployed to ensure the required levels of support at all times including in response to periods of greatest risk; with sufficient staffing in place to meet the specific needs of each young person. The inspector reviewed recent safety plans that were developed in relation to identified risks for the young people. They were all child-centred and of good quality. There were numerous incidents of behavior that challenged which were well documented. For example, there were 47 unplanned absences in the four months prior to the inspection. The inspector saw evidence that An Garda Síochána were notified appropriately where required. Interagency meetings were held with key professionals, including Gardai, to assess risk and design responsive interventions. Inspectors sampled missing from care records and found them to be appropriately recorded and detailed. Staff had the levels of knowledge and skill required to support young people with complex needs and risk taking behaviour. Furthermore, there were other incidents with different types of challenging behaviour recorded which were also reviewed by inspectors. There was evidence that centre staff were skilled in the use of positive behaviour support strategies and de-escalation techniques; which meant that there had not been a need for restrictive interventions or personal alarms in managing episodes of challenging behaviour. Other incidents identified health and safety issues, such as medication management. There was evidence that such incidents were reviewed and necessary refining of systems completed.

Young people were provided with information on their rights, including their right to make a complaint. There were six complaints from the young people since the start of 2021, including one from current residents. The inspector found that complaints were well managed and responded to promptly. There was also a detailed log for managerial oversight, to ensure timely responses. Young people were also provided with information on an organisation that provided independent advocacy for young people in care and there had been direct contact between the young people and the advocacy service. At the time of the inspection, all complaints had been resolved and young people were satisfied with the outcome.

The centre provided a warm and comfortable environment for the young people. Each young person had their own apartment with its own living space, kitchen, bedroom and en-suite bathroom. The inspector visited the two apartments which were unoccupied and found them to be bright, warm and tastefully decorated. The staff supported young people in managing their budgets; this included weekly food shopping and meal choices. Young people were encouraged to cook for themselves and others. Care practices had been adapted to accommodate the complex needs of young people more recently placed, recognising the need for the right pace and responsiveness; combined with suitable challenge and support in building their engagement and independence skills. Whilst highlighting the benefits of the refurbishment in relation to individual apartments, staff told inspectors that facilities did not fully meet the needs of the current young people in terms of communal and outdoor activity areas; communal spaces were limited, especially combined with the additional pressures in terms of social distancing.

The centre had closed-circuit television (CCTV) in use at the front entrance, exterior garden and on each communal floor of the centre. There was appropriate signage visible in relation to the use of CCTV.

Vehicles used by the centre were maintained and serviced as required, with the relevant safety equipment held within each car. The centre had a system for recording staff driving licenses and also which staff could drive the centre cars. Staff had received the required fire safety training. The safety statement for the centre was up to date and there was an identified health and safety representative. There were regular health and safety meetings held quarterly, and one had taken place since the re-localisation of the centre in July/August 2021.

The centre had a medication management policy in place which guided staff in the administration, storage and management of medication in the centre. Medication management audits took place on a monthly basis, and the actions from these audits were completed. Staff had received appropriate training, particularly where specialised medical needs were identified.

Standard 1.5

Each child develops and maintains positive attachments and links with family, the community, and other significant people in their lives.

Regulation 8: Access arrangements

The staff team planned, supported and facilitated family contact in line with the young person's care plan and their wishes. Young people were encouraged and supported to become involved in leisure and social activities in the local area.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 2.2

Each child receives care and support based on their individual needs in order to maximise their wellbeing and personal development.

Regulation 23: Care Plan**Regulation 24: Supervision and visiting of children****Regulation 25: Review of cases****Regulation 26: Special review**

Each young person had a placement plan and a placement support plan which was reflective of the person's individual needs as outlined in their most recent care plan. There was effective communication between the centre and the relevant social workers.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 2.3

The children's residential centre is homely, and promotes the safety and wellbeing of each child.

Regulation 7: Accommodation**Regulation 12: Fire precautions****Regulation 13: Safety precautions****Regulation 14: Insurance**

All necessary safety and fire precautions were in place. Vehicles were well maintained with all necessary registration and insurance up to date. The centre provided a warm and comfortable environment for the young people. Each young person had their own apartment with its own living space, kitchen, bedroom and en-suite bathroom.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 2.6

Each child is supported in the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Young people were helped and supported to prepare for adulthood. Aftercare planning and preparation for independent living was promoted by the staff team.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 3.1

Each child is safeguarded from abuse and neglect and their care and welfare is protected and promoted.

Young people were protected from abuse. Good safeguarding practices were in place and young people were supported to develop self-awareness and skills needed for self-care and protection.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 3.2

Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.

Staff in the centre had appropriate skills, knowledge and training in an approved model of care to manage behaviours that challenged. Relationships between staff and the young people were respectful and young people received the support and encouragement they required to engage in positive behaviour. The centre managed situations in line with the required policy, procedure and protocol.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 4.2

Each child is supported to meet any identified health and development needs.

Regulation 9: Health care**Regulation 20: Medical examination**

The health and development needs of young people were assessed on admission and both the routine services, such as having a GP, and specialist services, such as mental health services or psychological services, they required to meet these needs were provided.

Judgment: Compliant

Appendix 1 - Full list of standards considered under each dimension

Standard Title	Judgment
Capacity and capability	
Standard 5.3 The residential centre has a publicly available statement of purpose that accurately and clearly describes the services provided.	Compliant
Standard 6.1 The registered provider plans, organises and manages the workforce to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.	Compliant
Quality and safety	
Standard 1.5 Each child develops and maintains positive attachments and links with family, the community, and other significant people in their lives.	Compliant
Standard 2.2 Each child receives care and support based on their individual needs in order to maximise their wellbeing and personal development.	Compliant
Standard 2.3 The children's residential centre is homely, and promotes the safety and wellbeing of each child.	Compliant
Standard 2.6 Each child is supported in the transition from childhood to adulthood.	Compliant
Standard 3.1 Each child is safeguarded from abuse and neglect and their care and welfare is protected and promoted.	Compliant
Standard 3.2 Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.	Compliant
Standard 4.2 Each child is supported to meet any identified health and development needs.	Compliant