



Report of a Children's Residential Centre

Name of provider:	The Child and Family Agency
Tusla Region:	Mid-West
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	6 th and 7 th December 2022
Centre ID:	OSV 0005764
Fieldwork ID	Mon_0038480

About the centre

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

The centre is managed by the Child and Family Agency and can accommodate up to four children or young people, male and female, at any one time aged between 5 and 17 years of age. Younger aged children will be considered when they are part of a sibling group or family that require respite together. The centre aims to provide a respite and support service for children and young people who are living at home or in foster care. The service is for children and young people who have been identified as requiring additional supports to ensure they have the best possible chance of remaining in the family style living.

The centre's objective is to provide a high standard of care and a range of interventions to enable children and young people and their families to address some of their life experiences so that they are better equipped for family life. The centre works to ensure that children's individual needs are met, they are happy and healthy and have the opportunity to grow.

The following information outlines some additional data of this centre.

Number of children on the date of inspection:	4
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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.

In order to summarise 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
06/12/2022	09:30hrs to 18:00hrs	Hazel Hanrahan	Lead Inspector
07/12/2022	09.00hrs to 17.00hrs	Hazel Hanrahan	Lead Inspector

What children told us and what inspectors observed

The centre is a large detached bungalow set on a two acre site. The centre was served by a main motorway to neighbouring towns that offered access to heritage sites and a range of activities such as sport and art. The centre had access to two vehicles to support children to and from activities and school.

The inspector spoke with three children and three foster carers and listened to their experiences of the service.

The premises offered a warm, positive child friendly environment that was decorated with warm colours. Artwork created by children was displayed around the premises. This included a children's tree of rights in the hallway, painted and created by children. The artwork showcased the importance of children's voices held by the staff in helping to shape their own care and that children were encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings to create their safe space. The key messages on the tree were quotes taken directly from children that said;

- 'do activities we enjoy with us'
- 'understand young people and their situation'
- 'give us information we can understand'.

The premises had a games room that had a snooker table, sensory balls and games that catered to meet the children's needs through play. Additionally, there was a dedicated area in the sitting room that had a bookcase filled with books for different age ranges along with DVDs. The sitting room also showcased positive encouragements created by staff offering inspiration for children to read. Staff told inspectors that they used play and encouraged reading by listening to children's likes and staff created ways to put these in place, for example taking part in role play, purchasing books and sensory balls. It was clear from the inspectors' observations and speaking with staff that managers had considered the positive impact a child's living environment can have on them. The centre had a big outdoor space which was equipped with a large playground, seating area and, a fish pond, all of which was enjoyed by children. Staff told inspectors that the children used the outdoor space on a regular basis and that sports days were organised for children with their input on the schedule of activities.

There were four children availing of respite care at the time of the inspection and laughter was heard throughout the house from children and staff interactions. Inspectors were provided with an opportunity to participate in play with two children and staff, creating Christmas tree decorations in the shape of a Santa, a snowman and a penguin. Inspectors participated in the activity to learn more about children's

connections to staff and to their environment. The inspector listened to children talking and observed them interacting comfortably with staff about their likes and dislikes. The relationship between them both appeared effortless in their exchanges. Children asked questions and looked for support from staff with their decorations. Staff used encouragement and guidance to support children through the activity when they were finding it difficult. Staff also found a teaching moment with the children in how to use scissors safely and helped one child work through a difficult moment to understand their behaviour towards the other child. It was clear that children listened and responded positively to staff and this created a supportive learning environment for them.

The children told inspectors that they were excited to decorate the house for Christmas and to put their new decorations on the Christmas tree. The children helped the inspector to finish their decoration and said that they had a nice day at school and were excited to celebrate another child's birthday with a cake. The inspector was invited to observe the birthday celebration also. Staff had prepared a birthday cake and all three children were observed waiting excitedly in the kitchen for the surprise. The children were heard talking about how their own birthdays were celebrated by staff. All the children and staff gathered around the kitchen table and sang happy birthday to the child, who had a big smile on their face. The celebration of the child's birthday was seen to create a positive and meaningful memory for the children.

Staff told the inspector that they used different ways of communicating with children as children did not always have the words to name or express their feelings and experiences. This was done through keyword sessions, board games, group settings, cooking, artwork and using words and pictures. The staff were described by a child as;

- 'second to none'
- 'absolutely amazing'
- 'it's like my second home'
- 'comfortable to talk to staff' and that
- if 'I need them they are always there'
- 'blown away by the staff.'

One child said that they 'definitely' felt safe when attending the centre because night staff were there for them. The child said that staff supported them to attend meetings and if the child choose not to attend, they would ask 'if I had anything I had to ask' of professionals about decisions affecting their life.

The inspector spoke with three foster carers who described the staff as;

- 'very helpful'
- 'great guidance, can ring them up anytime'
- 'brilliant'

- 'great support'
- 'everything is pre-planned'
- 'follow routines'
- 'very good to talk to'
- child 'benefiting hugely'

The foster carers spoke positively about the staff and the service provided and voiced that they were supported throughout the child's placement for example a 24 hour support phone line was available to foster parents. The foster carers said that they knew the foster children were kept safe, with one foster carer saying that the child told them that 'it is [child's] safe place', with another foster carer saying the child 'would go every weekend if [child] could'. The staff were described by foster carers as having good communication, keeping them informed through updates, pre-planning before the child's stay and informing them of meetings. All the foster carers said that the staff were meeting the children's needs telling the inspector;

- 'staff help build the [child's] interaction with other children through play and support putting boundaries in place'
- '[staff] get more out of [child] than we do'
- child 'will speak to one of the staff there, [child] is very trusting of the staff'
- staff 'know when [child] wants to talk'

The inspector spoke with two social workers who spoke positively about the service and how the staff and managers were always available to speak with them. Social workers said that staff would provide updates about the child's stay and that child protection concerns were always reported to them in a timely manner. Staff at the centre were described by the social workers as;

- 'very welcoming and open to kids'
- 'very co-operative'
- 'very open to how they manage things'
- 'great support'
- 'given [child] and family both adequate time away. It's a shared experience'
- 'young person loves going there, it's the one consistent piece in the [child's] life'

Capacity and capability

The centre had a statement of purpose and function in place that clearly outlined the service it aimed to provide and the age range for children it catered for. However, improvement was needed to make sure that the services and interventions offered to younger children were developed. The statement of purpose and function was up-to-date and was due to be reviewed in February 2023. It outlined that children younger than five years of age would be considered when they were part of a sibling group and or family that required respite together. The inspector found, from attending a team meeting and speaking with staff, that further work was needed to make clear the type of intervention required and offered to children under the age of five years, due to their developmental needs.

From speaking with staff, the inspector found that they were familiar with the contents of the statement of purpose and were confident that it reflected the model of care provided to children. The inspector found that a child-friendly version of the statement was available to children as part of their induction to the centre and was also accessible as part of the reading material in the children's bedrooms. Additionally, user-friendly versions of the document were made available to families, foster carers and supervising social workers.

There was a centre manager in place who was supported by two acting deputy centre managers. Documents reviewed showed that the centre manager had a regular presence in the centre, interacted with children and staff and reviewed children's case files. The inspector found that the centre manager had oversight of the management of the centre which included oversight of records and the implementation of children's placement plans.

The centre had a full staff team in place, made up of social care leaders, social care workers, and agency and relief staff. The centre manager informed the inspector that one agency staff were in the process of transitioning over to permanent contracts. A regional manager had responsibility for the operational management of the overall service. There were clear and effective management structures in place where roles and responsibilities and lines of reporting were clear. Staff who spoke with the inspector said that they felt supported through supervision, team meetings and from seeking advice from their colleagues. Staff and managers who spoke with the inspector were clear of their role in the delivery of the service and were committed to providing stability, hope and opportunity to each child.

Social care leaders and deputy centre managers coordinated each shift and the allocation of tasks, to ensure it was delivered in a safe and effective way. The centre utilised the same relief staff to cover any staff leave to maintain stability and

consistency in the service. Inspectors found that the staff team were experienced in providing care to children. The team had received adequate training pertinent to their role in areas such as the model of care that underpinned their practice, child protection and safeguarding and the model of behaviour management that was in place. The inspector reviewed minutes from management meetings and found that areas of discussion focused on placement planning, review of significant events, training and the individual needs of each child. Inspectors reviewed a number of records such as placement plans, child protection referrals and found there was appropriate oversight by managers.

Standard 5.3

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

There was a detailed statement of purpose and function which described the full extent of the service and facilities provided to children.

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

There was a full staff team in place that was made up of social care workers and social care leaders who were experienced. Additionally, there was consistent use of the same relief staff who were familiar with the children and the day-to-day running of the centre.

Judgment: Compliant

Quality and safety

The staff and managers provided a good quality respite service to the children, foster carers and their families. This provided a support based on the particular needs of each individual child and their families. Short-term respite care helped to support children who lived at home with their parents or who lived in foster care, and to prevent placement breakdown. Inspectors found that respite care arrangements were flexible and worked around meeting the needs of the child. Respite care was arranged on a regular basis for children and this was planned in advance, but could sometimes be arranged quickly if an urgent situation arose. The managers and staff were clear on the purpose of respite care and the support needs of children who required it. Admission of new children to the service was well planned. However, inspectors found that risk assessments undertaken to determine the level of each child's care needs and the length and timing of the respite arrangements were not always up to date or fully

completed. Children may have a range of challenging behaviours or need additional support and risk assessments should attempt to identify any risks that the child may pose to themselves or to others.

Arrangements for safeguarding children were in place and all staff were trained in Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, and the Children First Act 2015. Staff who spoke with inspectors were clear on areas such as managing concerns about children and protected disclosures.

The work undertaken by the staff at the centre was underpinned by an approved model of care. Staff and managers explained that this model of care supported the staff to promote physical, emotional safety and hope around the ongoing needs of the children. Each child's placement plan was informed by the model of care and children were allocated a keyworker who completed direct work with them. Managers considered the age ranges of children who were availing of respite care and allocated specific timeframes to review progress and reassess further areas of development and life skills to benefit the child. This was broken down into two categories, children aged 13 years and older placement plans were reviewed every six months and children aged 12 years and younger placement plans were reviewed every eight weeks. However, the review approach related to children 12 years and under was not in line with Tusla's national arrangements for residential care for reviews to be held every four weeks.

Each child placed in the centre had an allocated social worker. The staff had a good working relationship with each social worker in relation to the overall plan for each child. Inspectors found that staff provided regular updates about the child to the social workers after every respite stay. Inspectors reviewed three children's files and found that one child had an up-to-date placement plan that reflected their care plan. The placement plan was of good quality and detailed the expectations and routines of the child, as well as how their needs would be met. One child was at the beginning of receiving respite care and their placement plan was being developed. The third child was no longer availing of respite care.

The care plans reviewed were of good quality, information was clear and it detailed the support and care needs of the child. All care plans were up to date in line with timeframes set out in the regulations. Documents reviewed showed regular contact between staff and social workers. The inspector spoke with one child who said that if they needed support to contact their social worker they would ask the staff. However, the child also had their own personal phone for the social worker to make contact with them. For younger children, staff said that they would support and had supported children to speak with their social worker by directly contacting them for this to be arranged. Records showed social workers visited the centre to review children's case file. On the day of the inspection, a social worker was present at the centre to undertake a review of a child's case file.

The staff were trained in an approved method of managing behaviour. This was reflected in the behaviour support plans that were in place for each child. Each plan reviewed was up to date and focused on each child's needs. The behaviour support plans provided staff with the opportunity to work with children, for example, in how to develop healthy behaviours. It also provided staff with the tools to unpick with the child what they were trying to communicate at the time and how best to support them. Inspectors found that staff had developed good communication with foster carers and provided updates after each child's stay at the centre. Foster carers told inspectors how the staff were always available to them to speak to and would provide them with guidance.

The manager and staff completed risk assessments related to children from the point of referral to the centre. The staff carried out daily risk assessments to assess whether or not there was potential harm in a planned activity and to help plan what steps should be put in place so that children could take part in a safe way. The risk assessments contained a range of actions, to reduce the risk if necessary. For example, some actions identified included specific pieces of work undertaken through the centre's model of care such as discussion with children on how to stay safe online and how to maintain or manage healthy relationships.

The service had a system in place to notify reportable events in line with Tusla national policy and procedures. Inspectors found on reviewing documentation that staff undertook individual work with children to hear their voice and to understand what was taking place for them when the event occurred. The inspector found that the staff used the centre's approved method of managing behaviour with children to help children during incidents. For example staff would provide a safe space for children to manage their emotions, to talk through the incident and teach them new coping strategies. This equipped children with new skills.

Inspectors found that there was no effective mechanism in place that monitored, recorded and reviewed the use of restrictive practice in the service. It was found that there was one restrictive practice in place that limited a child's interaction and contact with other children. The inspector found that the restrictive practice was in place since 2019 and was informed by an assessment also dated in 2019. There were also no revised assessments conducted. Where the managers of the centre and the social worker had identified the restrictive practice as necessary, there was no documentation available to indicate that the child was consulted throughout the decision-making process. The inspector found that there were no restrictive practice assessment in place that provided guidance to staff on how to reduce the practice and the interventions to work with that child. It was also found that there was no evidence that the restrictive impact on the child was assessed. This resulted in the restrictive practice being in use for a prolonged period of time, three years, and was not reduced or eliminated. Although the inspector found that the managers had raised their concerns to the social worker, they had not used the centre's risk escalation procedure to address the prolonged use of the restrictive practice in the service and the impact on the child. This meant that the child's rights were not always promoted and the service they received was affected, for example respite days offered were reduced significantly.

Following the inspection, assurances were sought by the inspector from the Child and Family Agency's (Tusla) social work service, with responsibility for planning and reviewing this child's care through a provider assurance report. A detailed response was received on the 11th January 2023 from TUSLA social work service that outlined a number of actions and timeframes for completion.

Children were safe in the centre and there were clear system's in place to ensure concerns about children were reported in line with Children First. The centre records showed that there were three outstanding child protection concern in relation to a child availing of respite care. Inspectors found from document review and speaking with the manager, that there was drift and delay in seeking updates from the social worker and in the use of the centres escalation procedure in responding to this.

Inspectors found that all significant event notifications were sent to the necessary professionals in a prompt manner and social workers said that they were satisfied with how incidents were managed in the service. Staff who spoke to inspectors were knowledgeable of their responsibilities in reporting child protection concerns.

The managers and staff provided different platforms for children to have a say. Children had a say in activities the centre provided, for example soccer, beauty, day trips and or planning meals. The staff offered a wide range of activities such as sports days and arts and craft. Staff actively encouraged children to take part in activities that were important or interesting to them. The centre had an up-to-date safety statement in place and all staff had undergone fire safety training. Inspectors found that all children had a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) in place which identified their individualised needs. The centre conducted fire safety drills with new children admitted to the centre and new staff joining the team.

There was a policy in place in relation to medication management. Inspectors reviewed a sample of medication administration and reconciliation records and found that the staff had a good understanding of the prescription and non-prescription medications a child was taking. The centre contained some bedrooms that were equipped with a safe where medication could be stored if a child self-administered their own medication. The staff would undertake a risk assessment to inform their decision-making and how to manage the child's safety. These records were appropriately maintained by the centre.

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

Staff supported the maintenance of positive attachments with their family through phone calls, guidance and support to foster carers, provide regular updates of the child's respite care and to maintain routines.

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**

The care plans reviewed were of good quality, information was clear and it detailed the support and care needs of the child. The care plans reviewed were up-to-date and in line with timeframes set out in the regulations. The placement plans reflected the care plans. However, the review of placement plans for children 12 years and under were not in line with national policies.

Managers and staff had regular and effective communication between relevant professionals. However, where a restrictive practice was in use, it was not effectively monitored, recorded and reviewed.

Judgment: Substantially 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**

The managers and staff provided children with a homely environment that was comfortable. Children were provided with their own bedrooms and shared communal bathrooms. There was an up-to-date safety statement and fire records inspected were found to be recorded appropriately.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 2.6

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

The centre's model of care assisted staff to implement plans that supported children to develop independent living skills and this was tailored to each child's needs.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 3.1

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

Staff acted appropriately to incidents of child protection concerns in line with Children First. Staff demonstrated knowledge in how to manage child protection concerns and how to report if they occurred. There were three child protection concerns open and there was a delay in requesting updates from the social worker and in the use of the centres escalation procedures.

Judgment: Substantially Compliant

Standard 3.2

Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.

There was one restrictive practice in place at the time of inspection. It was found that the restrictive practice had been used for a prolonged period of time, three years, and that the managers and staff had not sought to continually reduce or eliminate its use. Inspectors found there was no effective mechanism in place that monitored, recorded and reviewed the use of the restrictive practice. The managers had not used the centre's risk escalation procedure to address its prolonged use in the service and the impact on the child. Additionally, there was no available evidence that the child was consulted with throughout the decision-making process.

Judgment: Not Compliant

Standard 4.2

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

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

There was a medication management policy and procedure in place in the centre. The centre's model of care along with the placement support plan worked towards supporting health needs as outlined in their care plan.

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.	Substantially 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.	Substantially Compliant
Standard 3.2 Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.	Not Compliant
Standard 4.2 Each child is supported to meet any identified health and development needs.	Compliant

Compliance Plan

This Compliance Plan has been completed by the Provider and the Authority has not made any amendments to the returned Compliance Plan.

Compliance Plan ID:	MON-0038480
Provider's response to Inspection Report No:	MON-0038480
Centre Type:	Children's Residential Centre
Service Area:	Mid-West
Date of inspection:	6 th and 7 th December 2022
Date of response:	23/01/2023

This document sets out the standards where it has been assessed that the provider is not compliant with the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres 2018.

It outlines which standards the provider must take action on to comply. The provider must consider the overall standard when responding and not just the individual non-compliances as outlined in the report.

The provider is required to set out what action they have taken or intend to take to comply with the standard in order to bring the centre back into compliance. The plan should be **SMART** in nature. **S**pecific to that standard, **M**easurable so that they can monitor progress, **A**chievable and **R**ealistic, and **T**ime bound. It is the provider's responsibility to ensure they implement the actions within the timeframe.

Compliance plan provider's response:

Quality and Safety

Standard : 2.2	Judgment: Substantially Compliant
<p>Outline how you are going to come into compliance with Standard 2.2: Each child received care and support based on their individual needs in order to maximize their wellbeing and personal development.</p> <p>The National Policy in relation to the Placement of Children 12 years and Under will be reviewed commencing at the end of Q1 2023 with completion by end of Q2 2023. This will include how this policy applies to young people availing of Respite Care.</p>	
<p>Proposed timescale: 30/06/2023</p> <p>Completed:</p>	<p>Person responsible: Regional Manager</p>

Standard : 3.1	Judgment: Substantially Compliant
<p>Outline how you are going to come into compliance with Standard 3.1: Each child is safeguarded from abuse and neglect and their care and welfare is protected and promoted.</p> <p>Updates have been received on the three notifications.</p> <p>The child protection register will be reviewed monthly by the Centre Manager and any open reports will be escalated to the Regional Manager if an update has not been received within one month.</p>	
<p>Proposed timescale:</p> <p>Completed:19/01/2023</p>	<p>Person responsible: Social Care Manager</p>

Standard : 3.2	Judgment: Not Compliant
<p>Outline how you are going to come into compliance with Standard 3.2: Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.</p> <p>A restrictive practice register will be implemented in the centre to support oversight and governance and will be reviewed monthly by the Centre Manager.</p> <p>The requirement for a restrictive practice will be evaluated through a risk assessment that clearly outlines the reasons for such a measure, seeks the views of the young person, provides a timescale for review and details of what needs to happen in order for the restrictive practice to be reduced or eliminated.</p> <p>Where no change is taking place to allow for the restrictive measure to be safely reviewed or eliminated this must be escalated to the Regional Manager for their review.</p>	

Proposed timescale:	Person responsible:
Completed: 19/01/2023	Social Care Manager