

# Action Plan

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

<b>Provider's response to Inspection Report No:</b>	687
<b>Name of Service Area:</b>	Dublin South West/ Kildare West Wicklow
<b>Service ID:</b>	200-209-314/200-209-319
<b>Date of inspection:</b>	25 / 06 / 2014 – 03 / 07 / 2014
<b>Date of response:</b>	22 October 2014 (accepted response)

## Requirements

These requirements set out the actions that should be taken to meet the identified child care regulations and *National Standards for Foster Care 2003*.

### Theme 1: Individualised Supports and Care

#### Standard 2

##### Requires improvement

**The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:**

Some children were placed in foster care placements outside of the area.

For children who did not have an allocated social worker there was limited monitoring of access arrangements to ensure that they were in place met the child's ongoing needs in terms of attachment to their families and friends.

#### Action 1

Under **Standard 2** you are required to ensure that:

Children and young people in foster care are encouraged and facilitated to maintain and develop family relationships and friendships.

**Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:**

**Timescale and title of person responsible:**

#### **Actions to be taken by the provider:**

For Children Placed outside the Area:

A review of children placed outside the area will be conducted with a view to implementing the following actions:-

- To identify those cases wherein it is in the best interests of the child to transfer to the area in which he/she is placed and to transfer these cases in line with National Transfer Policy. Where difficulties or delays arise in transferring cases, this will be escalated to the PSW and Area Manager as required.
- To identify those children placed outside of the area who are not in relative care and who are currently unallocated and to put into effect immediately a system whereby their access arrangements are regularly monitored and facilitated by the relevant team leader.
- To prioritise the above cohort of children for allocation to a

For Completion by Dec 2014  
Fostering PSW/  
area manager

December 2015  
S.D./PSW and  
SWTLs for Children  
in Care Teams

<p>permanent social worker and also to provide an additional temporary resource to facilitate access visits and support the monitoring process as outlined in Action2.</p> <p>A Regional Assessment Project has been initiated and a regional team of permanent staff under the management of a team leader has been established to address the deficit in statutory fostering placements in the region. As part of this project an assessment of need is currently being conducted across the regions to assess the number and type of placements (addressing ethnicity, disability and special needs) required per area in the present to medium term. As need is particularly acute in D.S.W./K.W.W. it is planned that a combination of placements generated by the regional team supplemented by the commissioning of private placements will be deployed to address this deficit and address more effective matching.</p> <p>The number of children requiring placements as identified in action 1 plus an audit of new placements required will be conducted and the combined efforts of the regional assessment team augmented by the commissioning of private placements will be used to address the deficit in this regard.</p> <p>Contingency measures:-</p> <p>Unallocated Cases and Review of Access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- File review and audit will take place for children who are not allocated to a social worker. In situations where the care plan needs updating, a child in care review will be convened and this will include a review of the access plan</li> <li>- An area wide duty system will be developed for children in care who do not have an allocated social worker</li> </ul>	<p>Q.1 2015</p> <p>Regional fostering team leader/ area manager/ P.S.W.</p> <p>Q.1. 2015 S.D./C.O.O. and regional fostering team</p> <p>Immediately</p> <p>Area manager, P.S.W. T.L.</p>
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<b>Standard 3</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  Not all children were aware of their rights	
<b>Action 2</b> Under <b>Standard 3</b> you are required to ensure that: Children and young people are treated with dignity, their privacy is respected, they make choices based on information provided to them in an age-appropriate manner, and have their views, including complaints, heard when decisions are made which affect them or the care they receive.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider:</b>  <p>The fostering P.S.W. will ensure that all children in foster care regardless as to whether they are allocated a social worker will be given the <i>Speak up Speak out</i> leaflet. All foster carers will also receive this booklet.</p> <p>In relation to children without an allocated social worker a number of focus group sessions will be organised to explain the content of the <i>Speak Up Speak Out</i> leaflet and the complaints procedure. These groups will be organised on an age appropriate basis and feedback will be encouraged and fed back into the complaints procedure.</p> <p>Allocated social workers will discuss and explain the complaints procedure in a comprehensive and age friendly manner and encourage feedback. The satisfaction of the child with the placement will be assessed at every visit and complaints arising will be immediately addressed. A record of complaints and feedback will be kept and there will be regular checks by supervisors that these discussions are being held and issues arising are recorded and addressed.</p> <p>The children's complaints form will be completed and ready for distribution. There will be reference to how children can access their file and records contained in the complaints form. The complaint forms will be distributed to all children and young people by their allocated social worker or in unallocated cases by the P.S.W.</p> <p>In cases where children do not have an allocated social worker but a link worker has been assigned as a purely temporary arrangement</p>	<p>Child's Social Worker Sept 2014</p> <p>Social Work Team Leader September 2014</p> <p>Ongoing Social Worker for Child and Social Work Team Leader</p> <p>October 2014 PSW with lead for Quality and Risk/ Area manager/ P.S.W.</p> <p>Immediately Area manager,</p>

<p>the link worker will provide support to the child at a minimum level. This is not accepted practice as an ongoing solution but purely as a risk management measure.</p> <p>The Children's Book about Foster Care will be distributed to all children and young people by their allocated social worker or through the P.S.W. for those who are unallocated.</p> <p><u>Audit and analysis of complaints.</u> The satisfaction of all children in care with the complaints process will be assessed by audit at area and regional level.</p> <p>The area manager will hold a central log of complaints and associated actions/responses. This will be managed locally by the H.S.E. complaints officer and the Area Manager.</p> <p>An audit and quarterly trend analysis of complaints will be conducted and general issues emerging in relation to the fostering system will be addressed with both children, carers and staff.</p> <p>Children's rights will be a standing item on team meeting agenda's and this will be checked as part of a quality audit by the regional service improvement officer.</p> <p>The Area's information leaflets for children about making a complaint; decision making in the Court process and All About Foster Care will be provided to children newly admitted to care and also in advance of the Child in Care Reviews. Social Workers will record on child's file when this information is provided</p> <p>Child in Care Review Minutes will document that information with regard to how to make a complaint, "All About Foster Care" and advocacy services child has been provided with this information</p> <p>Children, who do not attend their review, will be provided with feedback on the review of their care plan and their views in relation to this will be recorded. If the child does not have an allocated social worker, either the duty social worker/social work team leader or another appropriate professional will provide feedback.</p> <p>File Audit on a sample of Children in Care files will be completed to ensure continued compliance with above</p>	<p>P.S.W.</p> <p>Sept 2014 PSW and team.</p> <p>Q.1. 2015 S.D./service improvement and quality assurance officers.</p> <p>Sept 2014 Area manager, P.S.W.</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above</p> <p>Sept. 2014 as above</p>
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<b>Standard 4</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  <p>Not all children from a different cultural or ethnic group were placed with carers from their own backgrounds.</p> <p>Foster carers had received limited information or advice and no specific training regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the cultural origins and care requirements for children from different ethnic backgrounds</li> <li>- the child's disability, diagnosis and implications for care.</li> </ul> <p>There were delays for children with mild intellectual disabilities accessing services and there were delays for some other children accessing services in line with their care plan.</p>	
<b>Action 3</b> <p>Under <b>Standard 4</b> you are required to ensure that:  Children and young people are provided with foster care services that take account of their age, stage of development, individual assessed needs, illness or disability, gender, family background, culture and ethnicity (including membership of the Traveller community), religion and sexual identity.</p>	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider:</b>  <p>The National Service for Unaccompanied Minors is under the remit and direct management of the regional Service Director, D.M.L. This service and the two fostering agencies from which it sources placements will liaise with the S.D. and area managers in the region to facilitate a training and awareness programme for both social workers and foster carers in relation to dealing with and caring for children of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. DSW/Kildare West Wicklow will be given priority in the programmes schedule.</p> <p>An assessment of fostering needs is currently being conducted by the newly appointed regional fostering team and areas have been asked to identify their current needs for fostering placements including those for special needs, disability and ethnic groups.</p> <p>The regional team is also currently conducting an audit of awaiting assessments and will be matching these to the needs identified.</p>	<p>Programme completed by February 2015 S.D. / P.S.W. for unaccompanied minors and area managers</p> <p>Audit and assessment of need completed. Regional fostering team.</p> <p>Q.1. 2015 S.D. / C.O.O. and Fostering regional team</p>

<p>Should the current pool of awaiting assessments not provide an adequate number of ethnic placements required then the S.D. will arrange with the two private fostering providers engaged by the unaccompanied minor's service to recruit and assess a quantum of carers to address the shortfall.</p>	<p>Completed PSWs and Area Manager</p>
<p>The children in care database will collect information regarding the ethnicity of children in foster care.</p>	<p>Quarter 1 2015 Regional fostering team.</p>
<p>The Regional Fostering Committee will also address the deficit in foster care placements for children with disabilities.</p>	
<p>The S.D. recognises that there is a serious shortage in suitable fostering placements for children with disabilities in the region and that this is exacerbated by the difficulty experienced by carers and social workers in accessing supports from the disability services.</p>	<p>December 2014 S.D.</p>
<p>The S.D. will negotiate with H.S.E. Disability Managers regionally to secure commitment for a package of supports for children with disabilities in foster care including training for foster carers. This package will underpin a special recruitment drive aimed at accessing additional placements for children with disabilities.</p>	
<p>Unmet needs in relation to children who are being negatively impacted by delays in accessing services will continue to be brought to the monthly Case Review Meeting in D.S.W./ K.W.W.(meeting that reviews cases that are complex and/or where there are service difficulties/issues identified). Issues will be escalated as required through Risk Register.</p>	
<p>An information pack for carers of children from non national families will be prepared by the unaccompanied minors service and distributed to fostering families in the region..</p>	<p>Sept 2014 P.S.W. unaccompanied minors team.</p>
<p>Ongoing measures at local level:-</p>	
<p>With regard to delays in accessing services for children with mild disabilities, the Planning Forum for Children with Complex Needs (which is attended by HSE Disability Services, Primary Care Psychology and Public Health Nursing and is chaired by Area Manager) and the Therapy Committee (PSW &amp; Principal Psychologist) will continue to operate in the area. Staff will be advised to ensure any difficulties in accessing a service for a child with a disability are placed on agenda for this meeting for the purpose of addressing this in a timely way.</p>	<p>Ongoing Area manager DSW/KWW</p>

<b>Standard 25</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  The outcome of complaints was not always appropriately recorded in a timely way  There was limited evidence that information arising from complaints had affected change.	
<b>Action 4</b> Under <b>Standard 25</b> you are required to ensure that: The Child and Family Agency have policies and procedures designed to ensure that children and young people, their families, foster carers and others with a bona fide interest in their welfare can make effective representations, including complaints, about any aspect of the fostering service, whether provided directly by a health board or by a non-statutory agency.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider</b>  The complaints process for the Child and Family Agency is currently under development. In the interim the H.S.E. complaints policy and procedure as enshrined in 'Your Service, Your say' will continue to be used. The complaints procedure for the agency that is currently under development will contain a suite of documents including: Policy and procedures, staff guide for feedback and complaints, guide for public on feedback and complaints, guide for young people and children (to include consultation) , web page.  In line with national office, the regional Quality Assurance Officer and the Regional Officer for Service Improvement under the direction of the regional director, will work with the area managers to ensure that a system is put in place whereby the complaints system and implementation is standardised across the region, responds in a timely and effective manner and is reflected in the Service Improvement Plan and the risk register.  A data base of complaints will be kept in each area and this will feed into a regional database.  Criteria will be agreed for tracking and quality assuring responses and identifying trends on a quarterly basis both by area and region. The quality assurance officer and the service improvement officer will organise quarterly training /feedback sessions with area	Q.1 2015  Quality Assurance Service, National Office  February 2015 S.D./ quality and service improvement officer/  Sept 2014 Area managers.  Feb. 2014 S.D. Quality and service improvement manager.



<p>managers and P.S.W.s to impart the learning, actions and changes involved.</p> <p>The quarterly reports on complaints and trend analysis will be submitted to the Service Director who will address these with the relevant managers in the context of resource implications, actions required and associated risks and responses. The S.D. will require a monthly report as to actions to be implemented on foot of the quarterly trend analysis of complaints. Major issues, trends and actions identified via complaints analysis will be actioned in the Service Improvement Plan and the risk register with appropriate and critical issues requiring national action being escalated up the line.</p> <p>Area managers will in turn address these issues and trends within their area both in terms of area management meetings and in one to one supervision sessions with P.S.W.s.</p> <p>Progress against action plans from the previous quarter will be tracked by the S.D. as part of her regular performance meetings with area managers.</p> <p>The first report of analysis of complaint in the D.S.W./ K.W.W. has been completed for Quarter 1 and 2 and the findings and issues emerging are now being reviewed for implementation and feedback by the area manager, the quality assurance officer and the service improvement manager and a plan developed to address same.</p>	<p>Q1 2015 S.D./ regional management team/ area managers.</p> <p>October 2014-10-21 S.D. Service improvement officer and area manager.</p>
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## Theme 2: Effective Services

### Standard 5

#### Requires improvement

**The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:**

Not all children had an allocated social worker.

Not all children had been visited in line with the regulatory requirements.

#### Action 5

Under **Standard 5** you are required to ensure that:

There is a designated social worker for each child and young person in foster care.

**Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:**

**Timescale and title of person responsible:**

#### **Actions to be taken by the provider:**

A staffing complement is yet to be agreed for the agency and this will be assessed in the context of the development of the caseload management tool, the review of thresholds and the implications of current need and future need as influenced by the introduction of mandatory reporting and anticipate legislative changes.

However, the S.D. has made regular representations to senior management underlining the inadequacy of current service provision to meet the needs of the area. These submissions have taken the form of a workforce analysis accompanied by a risk register. Every identified vacancy is submitted to the employment control group for filling with an associated business case outlining need and risk.

Emergency measures have also been taken to address gaps in unallocated cases. The area has traditionally carried a high level of maternity leave given the staff profile. Since inspection the S.D. requested the filling of 8 maternity post in July as a matter of urgency to address unallocated cases and these were approved by the Chief Operations Officer for filling. Some of these posts are in the system and filled by agency staff and some are being recruited. These posts were filled as part of recently introduced development whereby each region has been granted a pool of 20 posts to be

Completed S.D.

Sept.2014 C.O.O./ S.D.

<p>used to replace maternity leave. This development is a welcome development in addressing a major contributor to staff depletion and will result in a depletion in children without an allocated social worker.</p> <p>Currently there are 109/ 25% of children in care without an allocated social worker. This deficit could be addressed by the filling of 5 social work posts with social workers carrying a caseload of 20 cases. There are currently 6 vacancies in the area. The S.D. in liaison with the Chief Operations Officer will initially approve the recruitment of 5 agency staff to address the deficit in unallocated cases and to ensure that children are visited in line with regulatory requirements. This will amount to the filling of 13 vacancies since inspection.</p> <p>A system is being developed throughout the area to ensure that all children are being visited in line with statutory requirements. Since inspection all children in care have had a visit and there is agreement even on current staffing levels to ensure this happens at least every 6 months. However the recruitment of the additional staff as outlined will address this issue in line with regulations.</p> <p>Compliance with above actions will be audited annually by the service improvement officer on behalf of the regional director.</p> <p>Immediate contingency measure being currently implemented:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A system will is being developed across the area whereby all children in care are visited in line with statutory requirements. This system will include children who do not have an allocated social worker. Such a system is in place in part of the area currently and an analysis will take place to review the effectiveness of this.</li> <li>- Compliance of above action will be audited annually</li> </ul>	<p>C.O.O. S.D. Q.4 2014.</p> <p>All children visited by Sept 2014. Area manager/ fostering team local</p> <p>Service improvement officer and regional director..</p> <p>October 2014-10-21 Area manager and children in care team.</p> <p>Service improvement officer</p>
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<b>Standard 7</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  Statutory child in care reviews for children were not being undertaken in line with regulatory requirements.  Not all children had a written care plan in place	
<b>Action 6</b> Under <b>Standard 7</b> you are required to ensure that: Each child and young person in foster care has a written care plan. The child or young person and his or her family participate in the preparation of the care plan.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider:</b>  The commitment in the action above to recruit 5 additional social workers to address the unallocated cases should also address the 122 children in care without a care plan. 5 additional agency staff will be recruited to release experienced staff for deployment to unallocated cases.  The completion of care plans for all children in care will be given priority and progress in this regard will be monitored by the area managers and service director.  In compliance with standard the involvement of each child and their family in the care plan will be facilitated and encouraged and this will be monitored by regular auditing of a sample of care plans per area.  There are currently 17 relative fostering assessments ongoing ( this is a reduction of 3 since inspection) There are also 16 relative assessments ongoing ( a reduction of 4 since inspection)  It is intended to take on a quantum of agency staff to address the backlog in relative assessments in order to release staff to address child in care reviews.	Q.1. 2015 C.O.O./ S.D./ area manager.   S.D./ Area manager Q.1. 2015   December 2014-10-21 Area manager and service improvement officer.     Backlog cleared by Q.1. 2015 S.D. Area manager / fostering P.S.W.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A system will be developed across the area whereby all children in care are visited in line with statutory requirements and have a Child in Care Review to update care plan. This system will include children who do not have an allocated social worker.</li> <li>- Performance indicators that are collected in the area will demonstrate compliance with the above action</li> </ul>	<p>Q.I. 2015 Quality assurance officer and area managers.</p> <p>Quality assurance officer. Q.1. 2015.</p>
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<b>Standard 8</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with standard 8 in the following respect:</b>  The matching process for placing children with carers who had capacity to meet children's assessed needs was negatively impacted by the limited number of foster carers.	
<b>Action 7</b> Under <b>Standard 8</b> you are required to ensure that: Children and young people are placed with carers who are chosen for their capacity to meet the assessed needs of children or young people.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider:</b>  Please see our response in Action 1 under Standard 2.  To summarise the regional fostering assessment team is currently conducting an exercise that compares the audit of cases awaiting assessment in each area with their capacity to address the needs identified. This includes placements required to address ethnic diversity and children with disability and complex needs.  There are currently 26 general assessments outstanding in D.S.W./K.W.W. and these will be addressed and completed as a priority by the regional team.  Should there be a shortfall in relation to cases awaiting assessment and those required for complex need, disability or non national children then the assistance of a private provider with expertise in the field will be enlisted.  The regional fostering team is part of a project that will address the reconfiguration of fostering services in the area in line with standard business process and standards in order to produce a more effective service that responds efficiently, appropriately and in a timely manner to need. The regional team is in its set up phase and should be producing results in terms of increased assessments number by the end of Quarter 1 of 2015.	    Q.1. 2015. Regional fostering team/ S.D/ area managers.   As above   C.O.O. / S.D.

<b>Standard 13</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b> The area did not have an adequate after care service. Not all children over 16 years had been referred to the aftercare service. The plan for when some young people left care was not clear and there was not always a formal aftercare plan in place.	
<b>Action 8</b> Under <b>Standard 13</b> you are required to ensure that: Children and young people in foster care are helped to develop the skills, knowledge and competence necessary for adult living. They are given support and guidance to help them attain independence on leaving care.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	
<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>	
Actions to be taken by the provider:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The membership of the current area's aftercare steering committee will be extended to include stakeholders, including the local authorities, Department of Social Protection, Education and Training Board and other relevant voluntary services.</li> </ul>	Jan 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A regional aftercare steering committee is formed to support delivery of after care services and the full implementation of the National Policy for Aftercare.</li> </ul>	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning for Aftercare will commence when a young person in care reaches 16 years and will be part of the care planning process. This will include referral to the Focus Ireland Aftercare Service (funded to provide aftercare services to young people in the area).</li> </ul>	PSWs and SWTLs for Children In Care Teams Immediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Care Plans and Aftercare Plans will contain clear actions and timeframes with regard to the needs of each young person requiring aftercare.</li> </ul>	SWTLs for Children in Care Teams Immediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The creation of specialised dedicated Children in Care Teams across the area in 2013 will support staff in developing their expertise in the area of aftercare.</li> </ul>	Completed – Teams in place

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training on "Leaving and After Care Services" National Policy will be provided to teams to support staff in developing robust aftercare plans. This will be supported by Aftercare Staff who have an expertise in the area.</li> <li>- The Pathways book on Aftercare will be distributed to foster carers and young people, when he/she reaches 16 years. Administration staff in the area who update Children in Care register and Aftercare Register will alert Social Work Team Leaders to young people who are turning 16 years.</li> <li>- DML are currently advancing on proposals to develop a number of semi supported transitional aftercare beds within the region. The current proposal is exploring options of providing on average 7 beds across the region which would provide transitional support to young people leaving care and preparing for independent living. The young people would be supported for a period of approximately one year before moving on to independent living. It is anticipated that further progress regarding this proposal will be made in 2015</li> </ul>	<p>PSW for Children in Care Teams and Focus Ireland Aftercare Service Jan 2015</p> <p>Social Work Team Leaders November 2014</p> <p>End of Qrt 1 2025</p>
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<b>Standard 14</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  <p>A small number of relative foster carers had children placed with them since 2012 but no assessment had been commenced.</p> <p>Comprehensive assessments of relative and non-relative foster carers were not completed in a timely manner.</p> <p>Not all foster carers had An Garda Síochána vetting completed.</p>	
<b>Action 9</b> Under <b>Standard 14 a</b> you are required to ensure that: Foster care applicants participate in a comprehensive assessment of their ability to carry out the fostering task and are formally approved by the Child and Family Agency any child or young person being placed with them.	
<b>Action 10</b> Under <b>Standard 14 b</b> you are required to ensure that: Relatives who apply, or are requested to apply, to care for a child or young person under Section 36 (1) (d) of the Child Care Act, 1991 participate in a comprehensive assessment of their ability to care for the child or young person and are formally approved by the Child and Family Agency.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider:</b>  <p>As stated in Action 6 under Standard 7</p> <p>There are currently 17 relative fostering assessments ongoing (this is a reduction of 3 since inspection).</p> <p>There are also 16 relative assessments ongoing (a reduction of 4 since inspection). It is intended to take on a quantum of agency staff to address the backlog in relative assessments in order to release staff to address child in care reviews.</p> <p>The regional fostering team will ensure that placements are completed within 16 weeks according to standard. It is intended that all foster carers and relative carers will be assessed in a timely manner in the area in 2015.</p>	<p>S.D./ C.O.O. Q.1. 2015.</p> <p>Q.1. 2015. Regional fostering team.</p>

<p>Immediate contingency measures regarding the small number of relative carers who had not received an assessment in a timely manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All existing and future relative placements will receive a preliminary assessment prior to the placement of a child being recommended as an emergency foster placement. This assessment includes reference checks, checks with the local Gardai, area clearance check (to ascertain whether family are known to any social work departments) and also home visits by the fostering social worker.</li> <li>- A summary report of these enquiries are and will continue to be submitted to the Principal Social Worker for the Children in Care team, who determines whether emergency approval will be provided</li> <li>- Each quarter, performance indicators are provided with regard to the number of relative carers who have not received a comprehensive assessment. This data and also other information will be used to prioritise cases for allocation for assessment.</li> <li>- Cases identified of specific concern will be prioritised for assessment and if requiring escalation will be included in the Risk Register for the area.</li> <li>- As per Action 7, the regional fostering team will provide a dedicated resource to completing fostering assessments for the area. As this initiative is a dedicated resource, assessments will be completed within 16 weeks as per the fostering standards.</li> </ul>	<p>.</p> <p>Sept 2014 Area manager/ P.S.W. fostering.</p> <p>Q.1. regional team</p>
<p>Regarding action that not all foster carers had an Garda Siochana Vetting completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All outstanding Garda vetting requests will be processed by the fostering teams and submitted for vetting</li> <li>- The fostering database will record the date of last Garda Vetting. 3 months in advance of the next Garda vetting being required, an alert will be provided to the fostering social worker (or team leader if carer does not have an allocated social worker) who will arrange for a new vetting form to be sent to the foster carer</li> </ul>	<p>S.D./area manager/ P.S.W. Dec. 2014.</p>

<b>Standard 15</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  <p>Not all foster carers had a link worker allocated.</p> <p>Some foster carers did not receive regular support visits and supervision meetings were not clearly documented in case files.</p> <p>Foster carers were not always provided with sufficient information, in terms of a child's background and medical history.</p> <p>Foster carers did not have sufficient specialist supports to meet the needs of children with complex needs</p> <p>There was no formal out-of-hours service to support foster carers.</p>	
<b>Action 11</b> <p>Under <b>Standard 15</b> you are required to ensure that:          Approved foster carers are supervised by a professionally qualified social worker. This person, known as the link worker, ensures that foster carers have access to the information, advice and professional support necessary to enable them to provide high quality care.</p>	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	
<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>	
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider:</b>  <p>Regarding action for foster carers who do not have an allocated link worker:</p> <p>There are currently 131 foster carers without a link worker. The S.D. has submitted a requirement to recruit an additional 5 permanent social workers to address this critical deficit and is awaiting a response. It is intended that each social worker would take on an initial case load of 26 to address this deficit. These caseloads would be reviewed in March of 2015.</p> <p>Pending this recruitment the following contingency arrangements have been put in place:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A duty service for foster carers who do not have an allocated link worker will be developed across the area. Currently the two fostering teams are responding to this need in different</li> </ul>	<p>March 2015 C.O.O. / S.D. / area manager.</p> <p>Sept 2014 Area manager / P.S.W.</p>

<p>ways, with one team having a designated duty service and the other team responding to requests for service through the social work team leader (who accordingly allocates the case if required). An analysis of both these systems will take place, which will include seeking feedback from carers on the current service being provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Following this a standardised service for carers awaiting the allocation of a link worker will be introduced across the area. This will include greater use of support groups for carers.</li> </ul> <p>In instances where families do not have a link worker but have a social worker a system will be put in place as an emergency measure whereby the social workers can provide some support to the carers. This is acknowledged as not ideal and contravenes the separation of functions and will purely be used as a short term contingency measure.</p> <p>Regarding action relating to some foster carers not receiving regular support visits and supervision meetings with foster carers not being clearly documented on file:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please see action above regarding foster carers who are awaiting allocation to a link fostering social worker.</li> <li>- Fostering link workers will record clearly on their files when a visit (or part of it) is with regard to the supervision of a foster carer's capacity to provide a care placement to a child.</li> <li>- File audits will be carried out to ensure compliance with this actions</li> </ul> <p>Children with complex needs:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning Forum for Children with Complex Needs (which is attended by HSE Disability Services, CAMHS, Primary Care Psychology and Public Health Nursing and is chaired by Area Manager) and the Therapy Committee (PSW &amp; Principal Psychologist) will continue to operate in the area. Staff will be advised to ensure any difficulties in accessing a service for a child with a complex need are placed on agenda for this meeting. A circular will be provided to all staff in the area and details on the forum have been included in the induction manual for the area.</li> <li>- Unmet needs in relation to children who are being negatively impacted by delays in accessing services will continue to be</li> </ul>	<p>PSW for fostering Jan 2015</p> <p>Area manager/ P.S.W. October 2014</p> <p>SWTLs for Children in Care Teams Completed</p> <p>Fostering Social Work Team Leaders and PSW Completed</p> <p>Principal Social Worker for Fostering and Children in Care Area Manager Sept 2014.</p> <p>S.D. Dec. 2014</p>
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<p>brought to the monthly Case Review Meeting (meeting that reviews cases that are complex and/or where there are service difficulties/issues identified) Minutes will be reviewed annually to identify any specific trends in relation to service need. Issues will be escalated as required through Risk Register if local processes have failed to address difficulty.</p> <p>The service director recognises this as a critical problem both regionally and nationally. It is the intention of the service directors to meet with senior H.S.W. managers in the region to agree a package of support to foster carers and children with disabilities and to agree standardised and comprehensive referral pathways that will improve access to services.</p>	
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<b>Standard 17</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  <p>Not all foster carers reviews had taken place at three yearly intervals to ensure their continued capacity to provide high quality care.</p> <p>The outcome of all reviews completed had not been submitted to the foster care committee.</p>	
<b>Action 12</b> <p>Under <b>Standard 17</b> you are required to ensure that:  Foster carers participate in regular reviews of their continuing capacity to provide high quality care and to assist with the identification of gaps in the fostering service.</p>	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
<b>Actions to be taken by the provider:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of foster care reviews will increase, with a target of an additional 35 reviews taking place within the next 12 months.</li> <li>- The findings of the reviews will be communicated to the fostering committee.</li> <li>- Reviews of foster carers will be prioritised in situations where there has been an allegation/complaint/concern against foster carers.</li> </ul>	<p>PSW and SWTL for Fostering  Sept 2014 – Sept 2015</p> <p>PSW and SWTL for Fostering  Sept 2014</p> <p>SWTL for Fostering  Sept 2014</p>

## Theme 5: Leadership, Governance and Management

### Standard 18

#### Requires improvement

**The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:**

A number of national policies had not been fully or consistently implemented, such as the 'Foster Care Committee Policy, Procedure and Best Practice Guidance' (2012) and the 'Leaving and Aftercare Services' (2011) national policy and procedure document.

#### Action 13

Under **Standard 18** you are required to ensure that:

The Child and Family Agency have up-to-date effective policies and plans in place to promote the provision of high quality foster care for children and young people who require it.

**Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:**

**Timescale and title of person responsible:**

#### Actions to be taken by the provider:

- A Regional Aftercare Steering Committee has been established for purpose of implementing the "Leaving and Aftercare Services" National Policy. This committee will consider training needs of staff as part of their work.
- An aftercare data base will be completed and used to identify children eligible for aftercare.
- Refresher training will be provided to fostering and the children in care teams in relation to the Foster Care Committee Policy, Procedure and Best Practice Guidance (2012).
- In line with the above policy, all foster care reviews, disruption report and allegations against foster carers will be submitted to the foster care committee.

Service Director  
Completed

PSW and SWTLs for  
Children in Care  
Teams  
Oct 2014.

PSW for Fostering  
PSW for Children in  
Care Teams  
Nov 2014

PSW and SWTL for  
fostering  
Sept 2014.

<b>Standard 19</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  Management systems were not robust as monitoring and prioritisation of cases were not always formalised or appropriately recorded.  The service had no formal quality assurance or monitoring system in place.  There was no formal risk management system in place. The escalation of risk and plans for the delivery of services were not formalised.	
<b>Action 14</b> Under <b>Standard 19</b> you are required to ensure that: The Child and Family Agency have effective structures in place for the management and monitoring of foster care services.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
Actions to be taken by the provider:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best practice with respect to the management and prioritisation of cases will be disseminated at the Service Directors and Area Managers Meetings to ensure consistent application across all areas. Such practice will include appropriate documentation and record keeping.</li> </ul>	Q.4. C.O.O. Director of Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All cases awaiting allocation will be reviewed and assigned a priority status in line with national guidance which will be recorded.</li> </ul>	Q.1.2015 O,/ P.S.W./ T.Ls and S.W.s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A quality assurance methodology will be developed for application nationally.</li> </ul>	Service Director Q4 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Standard Operating Procedure for the Administration of All Risks was developed and disseminated to all Areas for immediate implementation in July 2014. This will remain under review to ensure risks are appropriately escalated and risk management formalised.</li> </ul>	Completed review ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A regional risk register for DML will be developed including risk categorisation and mitigating actions and the policy and procedure for risk escalation. Two posts have been created in the</li> </ul>	Q 1. 2015. S.D. Support officer for service



<p>region to assist with this process and to support Quality Assurance, i.e. Professional Support Officer and Quality Assurance Officer. The risk registers will be updated bi-monthly at SW Management Meetings to ensure the registers become live working documents which are used to support service improvements.</p>	<p>improvement, Quality assurance officer, area managers.</p>
<p>A Quality assurance framework has been agreed by the agency and both a quality assurance officer and a service improvement officer have been recently appointed to the region. Both these staff in liaison with the regional director are currently auditing service certain aspects of service provision/ developing Service Improvement Plans for the area which will address the development of an evidence base to drive best practice and underpin management decisions and planning. This plan will address the deficiencies in the various service areas including fostering and will identify and incorporate best practice models for actioning.</p>	<p>Q1 2015</p>

<b>Standard 21</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  The area did not have a formal strategy in place for the recruitment and retention of foster carers.	
<b>Action 15</b> Under <b>Standard 21</b> you are required to ensure that: The Child and Family Agency are actively involved in recruiting and retaining an appropriate range of foster carers to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people in their care.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
Actions to be taken by the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The regional fostering assessment team will have responsibility with regard to the recruitment of foster carers. Information within the area on the priority needs for children requiring a foster placement will be used to inform a strategy for recruiting carers to meet this need.</li> <li>- Exit interviews will be conducted with carers who will not be continuing to foster to ascertain reasons for this. This information will be used to inform service improvements and delivery which will support retention of carers.</li> </ul>	Regional Fostering Steering Committee 2014  PSW for Fostering

<b>Standard 23</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  The Foster Care Committee did not meet a number of requirements as outlined in the national policy.	
<b>Action 16</b> Under <b>Standard 23</b> you are required to ensure that: The Child and Family Agency have foster care committees to make recommendations regarding foster care applications and approve long-term placements. The committees contribute to the development of health boards' policies, procedures and practice.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	
<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>	
Actions to be taken by the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of foster carers; Disruption reports and reports on allegations and complaints will be submitted by the fostering teams to the Foster Care Committee in a timely fashion.</li> <li>- File Audit will take place to ensure reports are being submitted</li> <li>- Foster Care Committee information and feedback will be included in service planning. A meeting will take place to explore the mechanism for this.</li> <li>- A standardised addendum fostering assessment will be used for applications for long term approval of fostering placements.</li> </ul>	SWTLs for Fostering Sept 2014.  PSW for Fostering Quarterly Basis – Commencing Jan 2015  Area Manager and Chair of Foster Care Committee Nov 2014  Area Manager Oct 2014

<b>Standard 24</b> <b>Requires improvement</b>	
<b>The provider is failing to comply with National Standards in the following respect:</b>  The area did not have formal service level agreements in place with non-statutory agencies.	
<b>Action 17</b> Under <b>Standard 24</b> you are required to ensure that: The Child and Family Agency placing children or young people with a foster carer through a non-statutory agency are responsible for satisfying themselves that the statutory requirements are met and that the children or young people receive a high quality service.	
<b>Please state the actions you have taken or are planning to take with timescales:</b>	<b>Timescale and title of person responsible:</b>
Actions to be taken by the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Area currently has and will have individual placement agreements with private providers on file for each child.</li> <li>- It is the intention of the Regional Office to agree and sign a corporate Service Level Agreement with each of the private Fostering agencies. This S.L.A. will address in detail the package of care expected, the assessment, vetting, details of training and monitoring of carers with particular reference to standard and quality of care expected.</li> </ul>	PSW for Children in Care Teams Completed  Service Director Jan 2015