



**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

# Report of a Children's Residential Centre

Name of provider:	The Child and Family Agency
Tusla Region:	Dublin Mid Leinster
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	08 September 2021
Centre ID:	OSV-0004164
Fieldwork ID	MON-0033931

## About the centre

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

The centre was a community based children's residential centre managed by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). It was a large detached bungalow in a rural area in the Midlands.

The aim of the service was to provide a safe and caring environment characterised by good quality relationships between young people and staff, in which the service addressed the issues that were preventing young people from living at home, with a view to facilitating their earliest possible return. Where this was not possible, staff worked with each young person to prepare them for a successful transition to an agreed placement.

The centre catered for young people who required medium to longer term residential care, between the ages of 13 to 17 years on admission. Children under 13 years were considered and accommodated by the service in certain circumstances.

**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 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 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
08 August 2021	10:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Jane Mc Carroll	Inspector
09 August 2021	10:00hrs to 17:00hrs (remote)	Jane Mc Carroll	Inspector

## What children told us and what inspectors observed

Children living in the centre experienced good quality child-centred care. Care planning was effective. Children participated in decisions about their care and they were successfully working towards their agreed goals with the support of the staff, their families and social workers. Children were supported to maintain their sense of identity and contact with their family and friends was prioritised.

There were two children living in the centre at the time of this inspection and two children had recently been discharged. The inspector met with two children during the onsite visit, as well as staff. The inspector also spoke with two parents and one social worker assigned to children living there.

Both children were consistently positive about their experience of living in the centre. They said that they felt well cared for. Some of their comments included that the staff team "go above and beyond" for them and that they "get on great with all of them (staff)." They also said that the staff were "very nice" and that they liked living there. Two parents and one social worker also spoke positively about the care provided to children in the centre. Parents said that they were satisfied that their children were safe and that the staff were good to them. They said that staff kept in regular contact with them about their children's care and that they were available and pleasant in their interactions. A social worker assigned to three children who lived there said that the level of individualised care was good in the centre and children benefited from living there.

The inspector saw warm interactions between staff and children during the onsite visit. The staff team were skilled in developing positive and supportive relationships with children. Staff spoke about the children with a strong understanding of their needs and strengths. They were in tune with the potential causes of children's behaviour and they were creative in the ways in which they helped them to learn how to safely manage their emotions and feelings. This was consistent with some comments from children which included that "the staff know me so well, they look at me and know what humour I am in." From what children said, it was apparent that the staff provided emotional support to them when times were difficult, and that this support helped them to learn new ways of thinking and behaving.

Children said that staff encouraged their participation in activities in the centre, particularly during the recent restrictions associated with COVID-19. For example, they were encouraged and supported to get involved in a project to design and create an exercise area in the centre. The inspector saw that this project involved the participation of all children in the centre and their contributions included colourful wall

art and making decisions on the type of equipment needed for the gym. Other projects and activities took place in the centre, such as making new colourful flower beds in the garden which a social worker said was great fun for the children involved.

Children said that they received appropriate healthcare when required and the inspector saw and heard staff encouraging children to have healthy lifestyles and routines. Staff emphasised the importance of leisure activities and hobbies as a means of promoting children's health, resilience and increasing opportunity for interactions with their peers. Children said that they engaged in activities that they liked. However, children's parents said that they would like their children to avail of more structured activities, because they were unsure if activities were available.

Children said that they were happy that they could see their families. Access arrangements were supported and facilitated by staff in conjunction with children's social workers. One child said that "staff pushed for the things I needed, like more access with my family." This helped the child to maintain their sense of identity and family belonging.

Children preferred to meet their family and friends outside of the centre but they were reminded by staff to invite their friends and family to the centre where possible. Children were able to maintain relationships with their family and friends within government guidelines during COVID-19 restrictions. Social workers, guardians ad litem and aftercare workers visited the centre when it was safe to do so, and children had access to phone and video calls to keep in touch with the people who are important to them.

Children felt safe in the centre because they said they had immediate support from the staff team. Children felt listened to and told the inspector that they could talk to staff if they had any difficulty. One child said that they made a complaint in the centre and they were happy with the outcome of their complaint and how it was managed. Staff listened to what children had to say about living together and this helped them feel safe and improve their experiences.

Staff supported children to prepare for their future. Transition planning was carefully considered in conjunction with children's social workers and family where appropriate. In recent discharges from the centre, staff strongly advocated in the best interests of children and plans were devised on the basis of helping children have the best possible experience and outcome from moving on. A social worker complimented the centre for their work in this regard. Children were also supported to develop knowledge and skills that they need for independent living and they were encouraged to cook, shop and manage a budget.

There was a relaxed atmosphere in the centre. There was ample space inside and outside the premises which provided a variety of places where children could spend time. Children liked the centre and talked about the different areas which they enjoyed the most such as "the garden" and "gym" and "the snug" area. Children had their own bedrooms and they liked that they had the opportunity to personalise their bedrooms in ways that appealed to them. One child had a blackboard on their bedroom wall which they liked to use to express their thoughts and feelings. There was also children's art work on display in the house including a colourful map, designed by children, depicting the busy and quiet areas of the house to help children decide where to spend their leisure time in the centre. The premises needed updating and maintenance work and this was identified by parents and a social worker. They said that the centre could be more homely.

The next two sections of the report present the findings of this inspection in relation to the governance and management arrangements in place in the centre, and how these arrangements impact on the quality and safety of the service being delivered.

## Capacity and capability

There was effective leadership of the day-to-day operations of the centre. The management structure was defined and stable. Roles and responsibilities were clear. There were sufficient numbers of experienced staff in the centre and they shared and implemented the centre's ethos and approach to care being provided to the children. Managers valued and encouraged learning from internal and external monitoring of the service in order to drive improvement in the quality and safety of the service.

The centre was last inspected by HIQA in September 2019, when inspectors found moderate non-compliances with ten standards and substantial compliances or compliances with three. At that time, the centre had experienced an unsettled period and staff were challenged in the management of risks in the centre. Actions were identified in a compliance plan to HIQA to address these deficits and overall there was a good level of compliance found on this current inspection. Oversight and governance systems had strengthened and the management of incidents had improved.

Workforce planning and staff retention strategies were good. There were sufficient numbers of staff employed in the centre to meet the needs of the children living there. There were two staff vacancies at the time of this inspection which were being filled on a temporary basis by the same agency staff. Shifts were well planned to make sure that agency staff worked alongside permanent staff in order to minimise any disruption to the centres routines and daily operation. The centre typically used existing staff to cover for any periods of absence or leave to ensure continuity of care.

The inspector found that children in the centre were cared for by a committed and dedicated staff team. Staff in the centre were experienced and skilled. They were dynamic and creative in the ways that they responded to children and cared for them. For example, staff were given the opportunity to use and explore particular areas of their own interest or expertise which would benefit the children in the centre such as interests in art and crafts and mechanics. Collectively, the staff team met the aims and objectives set out in the centre's statement of purpose and delivered a good quality service to children.

The centre had a statement of purpose which had been reviewed and updated since the last inspection. The statement of purpose was comprehensive and in line with the standards. It contained the aims and objectives of the service and the range of services provided at the centre. Information about the management of the centre was clearly outlined and the day-to-day experience of living in the centre for the child was explained well. Staff understood the shared aims of the service and were consistent in their approach to care practices in line with the model of care used in the centre and the policies and procedures underpinning their practice.

**Standard 5.3**

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

There was a statement of purpose for the residential centre which clearly described the service provided in line with standards. The staff team had a strong understanding of the model of care used in the centre and there was a shared understanding of the centre's aims and the outcomes intended for 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 were sufficient numbers of staff with the necessary experience and skills to meet the needs of the children placed there.

Judgment: Compliant



## Quality and safety

Children living in the centre had positive relationships with each other and with the staff team who cared for them. Children experienced well planned and individualised care that had contributed to changes and improvements in their lives. The centre was experiencing a real period of stability at the time of this inspection and risks to the service, including risks associated with COVID-19, were managed very well.

The centre was welcoming, spacious, clean and bright but some improvements were required to improve the homeliness of the centre. There was some outstanding maintenance work required in a bedroom and hallway and some rooms required painting. The centre manager had identified this and had plans in place to improve the interior décor of the centre, and to clear overgrowth in the garden in order to enhance the outdoor space and the potential for more outdoor recreation. There had been some delays in the completion of maintenance due to public health restrictions associated with COVID-19 in the centre and the effects of the recent cyber-attack which were significantly challenging to the service.

Staff helped children to stay in contact with families and this supported children to sustain important family links. Staff supported children to visit their families and enjoy trips out with their friends. Children preferred to meet their family and friends outside of the centre but they were reminded by staff to invite their friends and family to the centre where possible. There were good levels of consultation and advocacy, between the centre managers, staff and children's social workers, to ensure that family contact and access was in line with children's needs. Parents said that staff maintained regular contact with them to keep them informed of their children's care.

Care planning was effective. Placement plans and placement support plans were developed for children in the centre and these were good quality. Plans were found to be comprehensive and dynamic in response to the changing needs and circumstances of children. Children understood their plans. They were involved and encouraged to participate in care planning and both children were working well towards their agreed goals. There were good systems in place to monitor children's placements plans and review their effectiveness. Team meetings, shift plans and handovers were used to ensure that staff were kept up to date on the care approaches and interventions being used with children.

Children were safe. There were set routines in place in the centre and staff supervised children closely. Children were continuously learning about being safe and they received key-working sessions on topics such as online safety, to help them develop skills to keep themselves safe. Staff received training in Children First and staff who spoke to the inspector had a good understanding of their safeguarding roles and

responsibilities. Allegations or concerns from children were managed appropriately and notified to relevant agencies and professionals in a timely manner. There was a designated liaison person who reported all allegations to the relevant Tusla social work department on behalf of the staff team. While staff are mandated to report allegations themselves, there were constraints to ICT systems following a recent cyber-attack, and not all staff had access to the relevant information systems. This was being addressed at the time of the inspection. There was a system in place to monitor the progress of child protection referrals made to Tusla social work departments for the children in the centre. However, the inspector found that the outcomes of these allegations were not routinely recorded and known, and this could be improved in order for staff to help children to understand the outcome of allegations in a timely, planned and supportive way.

Positive behaviour was acknowledged, praised and reinforced in the centre. For example, one child received a gift voucher to acknowledge their success at school. The use of sanctions to address negative behaviour was kept to a minimum. Staff were skilled at developing positive relationships with children and these relationships had helped the children make positive changes. Staff were also skilled at understanding the potential causes of children's behaviours and this was observed throughout care records contained on children's files. Safety plans were appropriately put in place when behaviours posed risk to children in the centre. These plans were based on good risk assessments and included suitable and responsive measures to reduce risks, such as managing the environment and providing emotional support to children. There was a decrease in the use of restrictive practices in the centre since the last HIQA inspection and such measures were used only as a last resort. There was a strong culture and focus regarding continuous learning and review of incidents and care practices in the centre.

Managers worked collaboratively with external professionals and communication with social works was maintained on a regular basis. The staff team ensured that all stakeholders were kept up to date of all relevant matters relating to children.

Children's health needs were promoted and addressed. Children were registered with a doctor and had access to dental, audiology and optimal care services when they needed them. The centre worked closely with health care professionals to promote children's health and wellbeing. Children were supported to access therapeutic supports if they needed to in order to support their emotional and psychological well-being.

Children were supported to prepare for adulthood. The inspector found that the managers and staff demonstrated good insight into children's individualised needs and the support afforded to children was tailored to each child's unique starting point. This meant that children had real meaningful and achievable goals to help support them for

their future. Children received visits to the centre from aftercare coordinators who provided additional support to children leaving care.

There were good systems in place to manage health and safety and fire safety in the centre. Two of the centre cars required updated tax certificates and this was addressed on the inspection.

**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**

Children were encouraged and supported to develop and maintain positive relationships and links with families, communities, friends and professionals involved in their lives.

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 child had a placement plan and a placement support plan tailored to their individual needs and goals, as set out in their care plans. Care plans and records of statutory reviews were held securely on file and these records were up to date.

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**

The centre was welcoming, spacious, clean and bright but some maintenance was required to improve the homeliness of the premises. There were good systems in

<p>place to manage health and safety and fire safety in the centre. Two of the centre cars required updated tax certificates and this was addressed at the time of inspection.</p>
<p>Judgment: Substantially compliant</p>
<p><b>Standard 2.6</b> Each child is supported in the transition from childhood to adulthood.</p>
<p>Children were supported to prepare for adulthood in a way that was individualised to their unique needs, strengths and vulnerabilities.</p>
<p>Judgment: Compliant</p>

<p><b>Standard 3.1</b> Each child is safeguarded from abuse and neglect and their care and welfare is protected and promoted.</p>
<p>Children were protected from abuse and there were good safeguarding practice in the centre. Children were supported to learn ways to keep themselves safe and allegations and concerns were managed well. Outcomes of child protection investigations by social workers were not routinely recorded and known in the centre and this could be improved in order for staff to help children to understand the outcome of allegations in a planned, timely and supportive way.</p>
<p>Judgment: Compliant</p>
<p><b>Standard 3.2</b> Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.</p>
<p>Staff were skilled at developing positive relationships with children and these relationships have helped the children make positive changes. Restrictive practices were not routinely used in the centre. Staff had the appropriate skills, knowledge and training to manage behaviours that challenged. There was a consistent approach to care throughout the centre.</p>
<p>Judgment: Compliant</p>

**Standard 4.2**

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

**Regulation 9: Health care**

**Regulation 20: Medical examination**

Children's health and development needs were promoted in the centre and interventions and supports were provided to children in line with their care plan.

Judgment: Compliant

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

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