



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Report of a Children's Residential Centre

Name of provider:	The Child and Family Agency
Tusla Region:	Dublin North East Region
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	07 - 08 July 2021
Centre ID:	OSV-0004176
Fieldwork ID	MON-0033549

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 Dublin suburb with access to amenities and public transport. The centre provided care for up to four children aged between 13 and 17 years who required medium to long term residential care placements. The centre provided care to children under the age of 13 years only in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with national policy.

The centre worked in partnership with children, their families and carers, their social worker and all other people with a bona fida interest in the welfare of the children, in order to provide the best possible care to each child.

The centre was committed to assisting social workers in obtaining and sustaining long term placements for children in their family home, with members of their extended family or in foster care.

The following information outlines some additional data of this centre.

Number of children on the date of inspection:	3
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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
07 July 2021	10:00hrs to 17:30hrs	Jane Mc Carroll	Inspector
08 July 2021	09:00hrs to 13:00hrs	Jane Mc Carroll	Inspector

What children told us and what inspectors observed

Children living in this centre experienced child-centred care which was individualised to meet their needs. The staff team were sensitive to and aware of the children's unique personalities' and needs. They nurtured the children living there and this could be seen through the positive attachments and trusting relationships between children and staff in the centre. Children participated in their care planning and there was a commitment to equality and diversity throughout the service.

There were three children living in the centre at the time of the inspection. Two children spoke to the inspector during the onsite visit. The third child was on a trip away from the centre with staff. The inspector also met with staff onsite and spoke to three social workers assigned to the children living there.

Both children were consistently positive when describing their experiences of living in the centre to the inspector. They said that the staff were "really nice and friendly" and that the "house was lovely." Children knew that the staff team cared about them. One child said that there was "always staff around to talk to them." Both children liked being in the company of staff. They said that the managers were always available to them and that they could talk to staff if they felt worried or needed help.

Staff members spoke warmly about the children to the inspector, highlighting their strengths and personalities. Equally, staff were in tune with children's needs and vulnerabilities and they advocated strongly to promote children's best interests. The inspector observed warm and respectful interactions between children and staff during the onsite visit. Social workers also spoke positively of the centre saying that children were provided with good quality care there and that staff were creative and responsive to children's needs.

The children said that they felt safe in the centre. Children were safeguarded effectively through the approach to their care. There were occasions when children went missing from the centre and staff were proactive in their response, and adhered to national policies and procedures, to ensure that they returned to the centre safely. Records of these incidents were detailed and clear, and information was shared in a timely manner with key people and agencies. Social workers told the inspector that overall, children were safe in the centre.

There was a commitment to diversity and equality evidenced throughout the service. The centre used interpreter services to communicate effectively with families where necessary, and information about the centre had been translated into another language. This facilitated inclusive and respectful communication between the staff,

children and their families. Children's cultural heritage and identity were respected and promoted on a day-to-day basis. For example, each child's placement plan set out actions to promote identity, such as preparation and enjoyment of particular food or access to information about their country of origin.

Staff promoted and encouraged children's access and contact with their families, communities and professionals involved in their care. Staff coordinated visits to the centre and provided emotional and practical support to children to help them maintain their relationships with others. There was effective and detailed communication between social workers and the staff in the centre in order to ensure that visits and access was appropriate and in line with individual care plans.

Children were supported to understand the restrictions on their lives due to COVID-19.

The centre was welcoming, relaxed and homely. The inspector saw and heard that children and staff had a real sense of enjoyment from spending time in the centre. There was ample space inside and outside the premises, which meant that children had a variety of places to spend time and involve themselves in a range of different activities, such as listening or playing music, cooking, art, constructing jigsaws, and watching movies. All of the children had their own bedrooms which had been individually decorated in ways that were meaningful to them. Other rooms, including the garden, were carefully decorated in ways that were attractive to the children. For example, there were comfortable, colorful seating areas for children and staff in garden to facilitate outdoor meals. Inside the centre, communal areas were comfortable and inviting.

Admissions to the centre were well planned and children's experiences of arriving at the centre were good. One child said that they were supported to settle in to the centre and new surroundings, as well with the existing group of children, in a sensitive and nurturing way. Transitions from the centre for children were also planned well in advance. Two children spoke positively to the inspector about the support and advocacy they received from staff in relation to preparation for leaving care. This included for example, education and information about relationships, budgeting, cooking and emotional support to manage and cope with such a milestone.

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 impacted on the quality and safety of the service being delivered.

Capacity and capability

There were effective management systems in place in the centre which ensured that good quality care was provided to children. The centre was well run. The manager was experienced and provided visible and effective leadership to her staff team. She actively encouraged and promoted the delivery of a high-quality, child-focused service. There was a deputy centre manager, who had recently transferred into the centre from another service. She was also experienced and skilled in her role. The management structure was clearly defined and roles and responsibilities were effectively delegated to staff.

This centre was last inspected in July 2019, when inspectors found, overall good levels of compliance. At that time, the centre was judged compliant or substantially compliant with 9 out of 13 standards, such as standards relating to child protection, preparation for leaving care, planning and co-ordination of care provided to children and the management of incidents in the centre. At that time, four standards were non-compliant and these related to the governance and management of the centre and the centre's statement of purpose.

There were appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that there were sufficient numbers of competent and experienced staff working in the centre. Staff were qualified and experienced. They shared the manager's commitment to providing a high quality service and their approach to care was nurturing and child centred. For the most part, the centre had a stable and consistent staff team which meant that children were able to build relationships with staff and form positive attachments. When additional staff were needed, these were usually staff who have worked regularly in the centre and who were already known to children. There were three vacant posts in the centre and the recruitment of staff had been delayed due a recent cyber-attack, and the temporary loss of Tusla's ICT systems. However, there were appropriate arrangements in place in ensure that there were sufficient numbers of competent and experienced staff working in the centre.

The centre had a statement of purpose which included some of the components set out in National Standards for Children's Residential Centres 2018. For example, it provided some information about the model of care used in the centre as well as details of some of the care and support needs of children that the service intended to meet. There was also a child friendly version on display in the centre. However, other components of the statement of purpose were lacking in detail, such as the aims and objectives of the centre, and the details of the management and staffing structure in the centre. The centre manager had identified gaps in the centre's statement of purpose in January 2021 and was awaiting guidance from the provider to address these.

Standard 5.3

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

The centre had a written statement of purpose and function which described some details of the service being provided and the age range of children that the service catered for, but it was too generic and not fully compliant with the National Standards. This was being reviewed at the time of the inspection.

Judgment: Substantially 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 employed in the residential centre to care for the number and needs of the children placed there.

Judgment: Compliant

Quality and safety

Overall, children experienced care and support that was nurturing, individualised and responsive to their needs. Children had positive relationships with staff and this underpinned and promoted good quality care. Staff supported and encouraged children to maintain relationships with their families, friends, communities and key professionals in their lives. There were appropriate safeguarding measures in the centre and children were safe.

The centre manager and deputy centre manager had ongoing communication with children's social workers and there was good collaboration, information sharing and planning and review of care provided to children. This facilitated good levels of oversight and accountability in relation to children's care. Social workers told the inspector that they received regular information about children's progress in the centre, as well as any incidents or concerns. They said that staff advocated strongly and appropriately for children.

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 updated accordingly to reflect children's unique circumstances. Actions were identified and

delegated to key staff to be completed with children. Children's views and wishes were considered throughout the care planning process. Children received appropriate medical care and individual work sessions were completed with children by staff in relation to the person's health and development needs. Medication was managed safely.

The centre prioritised and supported the relationships that children had outside of the centre with their family and friends. There was good consultation between centre managers and social workers to ensure that contact and access for children was in line with their assessed needs. Staff were sensitive in the ways they supported children to develop and maintain their relationships with families, friends and professionals. Children were supported to have regular phone contact with their family for example or helped to arrange an activity with family and friends outside of the centre.

Children were encouraged to learn or return to previous hobbies that interested them and promoted their wellbeing. As result, the centre was a hive of creativity and activity. One child for example, learned to play a musical instrument and to speak a new language, another child compiled a curriculum vitae and applied for part-time work, other children enjoyed jigsaws and these were framed and on display around the centre. Children were also encouraged and supported to engage in physical activities, including sports and outdoor pursuits.

Staff were sensitive to the needs and vulnerabilities of children moving on from the centre. They devised individualised independent living programmes to support each child's specific needs and skills. Through these programmes, staff provided children with a range of practical, emotional and educational support on areas such as budgeting, sexual health, positive relationships and coping with change.

The centre manager was the designated liaison person for the centre and staff members who met with inspectors were aware of this role. Staff were proactive and vigilant in their management and monitoring of children's safety. Staff used assessments of risk to identify potential risks or concerns to children and to develop actions to address these risks. The inspector reviewed recent safety plans that were developed in relation to identified risks for children and these were child-centred and of good quality.

There was one child protection concern in the centre June 2021 which did not result in a mandated report to Tusla, as required in line with Children First. Instead, the information was sent to the child's social worker as a notifiable incident. Although the child protection concerns were responded to by social work, the inspector found that improvements could be made to ensure that all child protection concerns for children in the centre were classified as such and reported in line with child protection policy and procedure.

When there were ongoing concerns about children's vulnerabilities, staff in the centre were vigilant to indicators and signs of risk and need. Staff communicated these to

social workers and external agencies appropriately and contributed to multi-agency decisions about children. The inspector also sought assurances from a social worker for one particular child, that an effective strategy was in place in response to ongoing concerns.

The centre was homely, safe and well maintained. The layout and design contributed to good quality, safe and effective care, having regard to the number of children in the centre. The environment was stimulating and was very much enjoyed by staff and children alike. The design and layout provided opportunities for rest, recreation, privacy, as well as opportunities for group activities.

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

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 which was reflective of the individual needs and goals outlined in children's care plan, as well as the day-to-day routines of children. Care plans and records of statutory reviews were held securely on file. These were mostly up-to-date. There was one review which was had been slightly delayed due to the cyber attack in May 2021 but an alternative date had been set for this statutory review at the time of the inspection.

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 homely and well maintained. The layout and design contributed to good quality, safe and effective care, having regard to the number of children in the centre. Fire safety arrangements were well managed. Insurance was in place. The centre maintained a risk register which was updated to reflect current risks in the centre for example, the loss of information communication technology systems due to the recent cyber-attack and risks associated with COVID-19.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 2.6

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

Children were helped and supported to prepare for adulthood in a way that was responsive to their unique strengths, needs and vulnerabilities.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 3.1

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

Children were protected from abuse. There were good safeguarding practices in place and staff in the centre worked in partnership with children, families and the social workers to promote their safety and welfare. Staff in the centre were vigilant to indicators and signs of risk and need and they communicated these to social workers and external agencies appropriately. Improvements could be made to ensure that all child protection concerns for children in the centre were classified as such and reported in line with child protection policy and procedure.

Judgment: Substantially compliant

Standard 3.2

Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.

Restrictive practices were not routinely used in the centre. Staff had appropriate skills, knowledge and training to manage behaviours that challenged. Children experienced care and support that was nurturing, individualised and responsive to their needs. They had positive relationships with staff and this underpinned and promoted good quality care.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 4.2

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

Regulation 9: Health care

Regulation 20: Medical examination

Children's health and medical needs were promoted and addressed appropriately.

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