



**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
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	02 – 03 February 2022
Centre ID:	OSV-0004200
Fieldwork ID	MON-0035703

## About the centre

The centre is a Child and Family Agency residential respite service located in the West of the country. The centre provides a respite and support service for children between the ages of 5 and 17 years who are living at home or in foster care, that have been identified as requiring additional supports to maintain their placement in their family environment. The centre could offer respite and day/outreach support for up to 20 children, with capacity for up to 4 children to stay overnight.

The goal of the respite service was to keep families together by providing a comprehensive support structure to sustain the child's living arrangements. The centre staff worked closely with children and their families to assist children to meet their full potential and enhance their coping mechanisms. The centre aimed to support the holistic development of the child in a homely, stable and secure environment showing compassion and respect for the child.

**The following information outlines some additional data of this centre.**

Number of children on the date of inspection:	8
---	---

## How we inspect

To prepare for this inspection the inspector reviewed all information about this centre. This included any previous inspection findings and information received since the last inspection.

As part of our inspection, where possible, we:

- speak with children and the people who visit them to find out their experience of the service
- talk to staff and management to find out how they plan, deliver and monitor the care and support services that are provided to children who live in the centre
- observe practice and daily life to see if it reflects what people tell us
- review documents to see if appropriate records are kept and that they reflect practice and what people tell us.

In order to summarize our inspection findings and to describe how well a service is doing, we group and report on the standards and related regulations under two dimensions:

### **1. Capacity and capability of the service:**

This section describes the leadership and management of the centre and how effective it is in ensuring that a good quality and safe service is being provided. It outlines how people who work in the centre are recruited and trained and whether there are appropriate systems and processes in place to underpin the safe delivery and oversight of the service.

### **2. Quality and safety of the service:**

This section describes the care and support children receive and if it was of a good quality and ensured people were safe. It includes information about the care and supports available for people and the environment in which they live.

A full list of all standards and the dimension they are reported under can be seen in Appendix 1.

**This inspection was carried out during the following times:**

Date	Times of inspection	Inspector	Role
02 February 2022	10:00hrs to 18:00hrs	Sabine Buschmann	Inspector
02 February 2022	10:00hrs to 18:00hrs	Hazel Hanrahan	Inspector
03 February 2022	09:00hrs to 15:00hrs	Sabine Buschmann	Inspector
03 February 2022	09:00hrs to 13:00hrs	Hazel Hanrahan	Inspector

## What children told us and what inspectors observed

From what children said and what the inspector observed, it was clear that children were provided with good quality care when they spent time at the centre. Children who spoke to inspectors were positive about the care they received during their respite periods and said that they enjoyed the activities provided by staff. From a review of files inspectors found that Children were listened to and activities provided in the centre were based on children's interests, fostering existing hobbies as well as, providing children with new experiences. The staff team was proactive and innovative in providing care to the children and ensured they could pursue hobbies and activities they enjoyed. At the time of the inspection there were eight children attending the centre for respite.

The centre was a large detached bungalow located on a spacious site on the outskirts of a town. The centre consisted of four bedrooms with a large front and rear garden. The centre was clean, warm, and homely. Inspectors observed that it had been beautifully decorated with close attention to detail, which contributed to a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Children attending for respite rotated bedrooms and children's belongings were stored safely in a store room in between their stays at the centre. Staff endeavoured to ensure that children were accommodated in the same bedroom during each respite period for consistency and familiarity. The centre consisted of four nicely decorated bedrooms. There was a games room, a sensory room, a beauty therapy room, and a visitor room with a separate kitchen and bathroom. Children told inspectors they enjoyed being in the centre because they can have fun and "chill" there.

Inspector met with two children who were accessing the centre for respite care. Six children declined the option to speak with inspectors and completed a questionnaire instead. Children told the inspector that they liked coming to the centre and that they found the staff to be helpful, supportive, and easy to talk to. All of the children who completed the questionnaire wrote that they felt supported and could talk to staff about everything. They described their stay as "good craic," "good fun", and that the centre was "class". Children spoke about how much they enjoyed the activities offered which included, a range of outdoor activities including horse riding, surfing and go-carting. They told the inspector that they were consulted on all the activities that were on offer in the centre and their likes and dislikes were discussed with their respective keyworkers.

Inspectors spoke with three foster carers, two social workers and a social work team leader. Social workers said that the service provided by the respite centre was well organised and child-centred. From these discussions it was clear that the centre was meeting its objective of maintaining children in their homes. Families were all very happy with the service and felt supported in their care of the child. They appreciated the break that respite afforded them as well as giving children space to "wind down". Foster carers

described a high standard of care where every child was treated as an individual, and their care was based on each child's particular needs. Foster carers described the staff as "fabulous", "never met a nicer bunch of social care workers" and "couldn't speak highly enough of them". They also said that the staff team were good advocates for children and that the respite service was providing their families with extra supports to manage day to day life when the children were at home. One social worker told the inspectors that the centre was instrumental in supporting a child from being very shy and isolated to being now an open outgoing young person with a good circle of friends and attending club sports. Social workers said that the staff team was innovative, child centred and described the centre as a "first class" service.

Inspectors found that the centre was a lovely and homely place for children where good quality respite care was provided. The centre was portrayed by all who participated in this inspection as effective at supporting children therapeutically to remain in their home or placement where the staff team worked closely and in partnership with families and professionals alike to ensure the best outcomes for the children in their care.

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

## Capacity and capability

The centre was well run and adequately resourced. The governance arrangements in place ensured that the service provided to children was safe and of good quality. There was a management structure in place with clearly defined lines of authority and accountability. The centre manager was qualified and experienced. The manager was supported by an equally experienced deputy manager and six social care leaders. The centre manager reported to the alternative care manager, who had overall responsibility for the quality and effectiveness of services provided.

The centre was last inspected in November 2020. At that time eight standards inspected were found to be compliant and one standard was substantially compliant. This inspection found that the centre had maintained a well-managed respite service, providing good therapeutic quality of care to children.

The centre had a statement of purpose and function which had been reviewed in January 2022. This was a comprehensive document which accurately described the full organisational structure, the ethos and philosophy of the centre, the model of care, the management and staff employed in the centre and the policies and procedures that inform the daily care practice in the centre. A child friendly version of the statement of

purpose and function was displayed in the centre and a copy was given to children and families availing of the services.

A national suite of policies and procedures had been introduced in May 2021 and was successfully implemented in the centre. The inspector found that records in the centre, such as care files, placement planning documentation, significant event notifications (SENS) and child protection referrals were well maintained and had appropriate oversight by the centre manager. All staff who spoke to the inspector were familiar with the centres therapeutic model of care and the individual approaches to children. Staff and management were knowledgeable and experienced in implementing the therapeutic model of care to ensure that children attending for respite developed skills and knowledge to assist them in reaching their full potential.

Staffing resources in the centre ensured that children received a quality service from a consistent staff team. The centre was fully staffed with a competent, experienced staff team and there were no vacancies. In addition to the management team, the centre staff team consisted of six social care workers and two relief social care workers. However, the centre did rely on two suitably experienced and qualified agency staff to cover maternity leave, parental leave and sick leave as required.

Staff felt supported by their managers in the performance of their duties. Social care workers who met with the inspectors said that managers were accessible, both informally and formally through staff supervision, team and management meetings. There were no issues with staff retention and staff reported to being very happy in the centre and fulfilled in their roles. This ensured continuity of care for the children who came to the centre.

The managers operated a formal on-call system in case of an emergency in the absence of a national on-call system.

### **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 statement of purpose and function which clearly described the model of service that it delivered and the age range of children that the service catered for. There was also a children's version available, which provided children and families with information about life in the centre.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 6.1**

The registered provider plans, organises and manages the workforce to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.

**Regulation 6: Staffing**

The management team ensured there were an appropriate numbers of staff with the necessary experience and competencies to meet the needs of the children.

Judgment: Compliant

**Quality and safety**

Children received care in the centre which was tailored to their specific needs. The staff team were experienced and skilled in identifying and addressing needs of children, and they were creative in the ways in which they supported them. Inspectors found that staff were skilled and sensitive in responding to the children's needs. Inspectors observed that staff had respectful relationships with the children and interacted with them in a nurturing and positive manner. Inspectors observed that children related to staff in a positive manner and that children appeared to feel relaxed in the company of staff.

The centre operated a therapeutic model of care that focused on the development of healthy relationships which challenged and supported children without judging them. Children were involved in activities relevant to their interests and hobbies. Activities were planned on a daily basis, in line with the children's placement plans. Staff were proactive and innovative in supporting children to pursue their hobbies and interests.

Children had the opportunity to participate in the running of the centre in relation to the care they received. The center had introduced feedback forms which provided children with an opportunity to provide feedback and make suggestions. Regular children's meetings were held fortnightly using a child friendly template, which enabled children to participate in the running of the centre as a group. In addition, children shared the task of minute taking and chairing meetings to learn new skills. The minutes of the children's meetings were presented to the staff team meeting for discussion and feedback was provided to children's meetings.

Children were facilitated and supported to maintain appropriate contact with their families and significant others during their respite stay. Foster carers who spoke to the inspectors described good consistent communication with the staff team and that the centre encouraged contact through phone calls, video conferencing and emails.

All children had up to date care plans and their individual goals were reviewed regularly or as required. Placement plans were up-to-date at the time of inspection and were based on the goals identified in the care plans provided by the social work department. Placement

plans were based on a therapeutic model of care and were detailed and of good quality, outlining the children's needs and supports required to assist in meeting those needs. Children who spoke to the inspector said they were consulted in the development of their placement plans. The inspector reviewed children's records and found that the aims and objectives of the placement plans were reflected and acted upon in key working sessions and planned activities. Inspectors reviewed 1:1 keyworking documents and found that the staff team were innovative in providing therapeutic supports and choices to problem solving. Children were provided with different options and the outcomes of these options would be discussed according to the child's ability and comprehension. From a review of children's records, inspectors were able to measure the outcomes by the progress children had made since attending for respite at the centre, with children presenting with more confidence, improved self care skills and newly developed skills from exposure to new and positive experiences and activities.

All children had a behavioural support plan. When behaviours required interventions staff used a positive behaviour approaches which was documented in children's case records. This involved an understanding of the reasons for the behaviour and considered the child as a whole, including their life history, physical health and emotional needs to implement ways of supporting the child. Managers and staff told the inspector that the model of care used in the centre encouraged positive self-worth, self-esteem building and focused on developing existing strength and interests.

Each child in the centre had an allocated social worker. The inspector reviewed children's files and found that the centre staff were in regular contact with children's social workers to provide information on the respite period and to follow up on issues that may have arisen during the children's respite period. Social workers who spoke to the inspectors said that the centre kept them informed and described good communication with both staff and managers.

The therapeutic work undertaken in the centre during respite focused on supporting children in the transition from childhood to adulthood. This was a key feature of placement planning in the centre. The inspector found that activities provided at the respite centre provided opportunities for children to develop independent living skills, appropriate to their age, development and experience of trauma. This included independent living skills, such as cooking, baking, problem solving, negotiating and budgeting. The inspector found that staff sought opportunities for children to develop independent living skills, appropriate to their age, development and capability. In addition, good attention was paid to helping young people to re-build their networks of support and to develop confidence and to develop new links in their own local community through a range of social activities.

Children's educational needs which were outlined in care and placement plans were supported by the staff team in the centre. Staff facilitated children to attend school, to

complete home work, liaised with schools where required and children were encouraged in learning new skills and new experiences.

Managers and staff were committed to the protection of the children. The centre had measures in place to promote the safety of children. Staff responded appropriately to child protection concerns by referring them to the relevant social work department. Staff and managers who spoke to the inspectors had good knowledge of their obligations under Children First: National Guidance on the Protection and Welfare of Children (Children First), 2017. The centre had a safeguarding statement and a range of protective measures, which included completing collective and individual risk assessment in relation to any new risks that emerged. The inspector reviewed the child protection register and found it contained two child protection concerns which were open and were appropriately reported in line with Children First 2017. Collective and individual risk assessments were a common feature of this centre in how it safeguarded children, and assessments reviewed by the inspector were found to be of good quality, and important in informing decisions about risk. Staff told inspectors that any concerns they had could be raised in the team meeting forum and that the managers were very approachable in the event that they needed to raise any issues with them. In sampling minutes of team meetings the inspector observed progress in how team meetings were recorded and identified actions were appropriately followed up on.

Significant events were responded to appropriately. Records of these events were well maintained and significant events were reported to social workers, the monitoring officer, guardians' ad litem and parents/guardian. From a review of the center's SEN log the inspector found that incidents for the centre were very low, but when they occurred they were notified in a timely manner. Social workers who spoke to inspectors said that they were notified of all significant events in an appropriate and timely manner.

The centre manager attended Tusla's significant event review group (SERG) meetings for the Dublin North East service area. This allowed for independent monitoring of selected significant events occurring in the West and Dublin North East regions, and recommendations from the SERG group were shared and discussed at staff team meetings. This promoted learning amongst the staff team.

The centre was clean, homely and provided a warm and inviting environment for the children. Both indoor and outdoor areas were tidy and well maintained. The centre comprised of four large bedrooms that were rotated between the children attending for respite. Children's belongings were securely stored in large boxes in a separate room. There were two sitting rooms, a play/games room, a large communal kitchen, a make up room, a sensory room and there was beautiful art work on the walls throughout the building created by children attending the centre for respite.

There was a large garden with a trampoline and a newly purchased table tennis table and outdoor play equipment for children to use. However, while there were ample outside space, children were unable to use the space as the grounds were continuously waterlogged, preventing children from engaging in outdoor sports activities.

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

Vehicles used by the centre were maintained and serviced as required, with the relevant safety equipment held within each car. Staff had received the required fire safety training. The safety statement for the centre was up to date and there was an identified health and safety representative. There were regular health and safety meetings held quarterly. However, inspectors found that there was a problem with the emergency lighting in the centre. The centre manager told inspectors that the lights would come on at random, including at nights in the children's bedrooms. These incidents occurred in November 2021 and were immediately escalated to the alternative care manager. Attempts had been made to fix the issue by the company who installed the system and the issue was resolved for two weeks in December 2021. However, the emergency lighting was presenting with the same issue again and while emergency lighting experts were on site during the inspection the issues remained unresolved. The manager told inspectors that a new fire system was required and they are awaiting approval for the work to commence.

The centre had interventions in place to support children's health and development needs. The centre had appropriate medication management systems in place. There was a medication management policy and procedure in place for the centre which guided staff in the administration, storage and management of medication in the centre. Medication management audits took place on a monthly basis, and the actions from these audits were completed. All staff had received appropriate training in medication management.

While all staff were trained in a Tusla approved therapeutic model of managing challenging behaviours, physical interventions were not used within the centre. Children were not subject to any unnecessary restrictive procedures in the centre. The centre manager told the inspector that restrictive practice would only be utilised when an individual risk presented, was appropriately risk assessed and would be used for the shortest possible time with ongoing review.

**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**

Young people were facilitated to maintain appropriate contact with their families and significant others.

---

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 2.2**

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

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

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

---

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 2.3**

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

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

All necessary safety and fire precautions were in place. Vehicles were well maintained with all necessary registration and insurance up to date. The centre provided a warm and comfortable environment for the children. There was an up-to-date safety statement in place. Fire precautions throughout the centre were adequate. However, the emergency lighting was faulty and required repair .

---

Judgment: Substantially compliant

**Standard 2.6**

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

Young people were helped and supported to prepare for adulthood. Activities provided and facilitated in the centre contributed to assisting children to develop appropriate skills into adulthood.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 3.1**

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

Children were safeguarded in the centre and their care and welfare was protected and promoted. The centre had an up-to-date safeguarding statement and staff had a good understanding and working knowledge of Children First: National Guidance on the Protection and Welfare of Children (Children First), 2017.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 3.2**

Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.

The centre had implemented a model of care that promoted positive behaviours and restrictive practice was not used in the centre. Relationships between staff and the children were respectful and children received the support and encouragement they required to engage in positive behaviour.

Judgment: Compliant

**Standard 4.2**

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

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

The centre had interventions in place to support children's health and development needs. The centre had appropriate medication management systems in place. There was a medication management policy and procedure in place for the centre, which was adequate, up to date and fully implemented.

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