

## Statutory foster care service

### Report on the progress made by Tusla's Dublin North East Region in reaching compliance with eight of the *National Standards for Foster Care*

Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)  
Regulation Directorate monitoring inspection  
report on a statutory foster care service under the  
Child Care Act, 1991



<b>Name of Child and Family Agency (Tusla) region:</b>	Dublin North East Region
<b>Timeframe of HIQA follow-up monitoring activity</b>	<b>Commenced on:</b> 6 June 2018 Self-assessment and statement of compliance forms issued to each area. <b>Fieldwork:</b> 27-28 June 2018 10 -11 July 2018 11-12 July 2018 <b>Report finalised:</b> 7 November 2018

## About HIQA monitoring of statutory foster care services

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) monitors services used by some of the most vulnerable children in the State. Monitoring provides assurance to the public that children are receiving a service that meets the requirements of quality standards. This process also seeks to ensure that the wellbeing, welfare and safety of children is promoted and protected. Monitoring also has an important role in driving continual improvement so that children have better, safer services.

HIQA is authorised by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs under Section 69 of the Child Care Act, 1991 as amended by Section 26 of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011 to inspect foster care services provided by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and to report on its findings to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. HIQA monitors foster care services against the *National Standards for Foster Care*, published by the Department of Health and Children in 2003.

In order to promote quality and improve safety in the provision of foster care services, HIQA carries out inspections to:

- **assess** if Tusla— the service provider — has all the elements in place to safeguard children
- **seek assurances** from service providers that they are **safeguarding children** by reducing serious risks
- **provide** service providers with the **findings** of inspections so that service providers develop action plans to implement safety and quality improvements
- **Inform** the public and **promote confidence** in services through the publication of HIQA's findings.

HIQA inspects services to see if the National Standards are met. Inspections can be announced or unannounced.

## **Child and Family Agency (Tusla)**

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) has the legal responsibility to promote the welfare of children and protect those who are deemed to be at risk of harm. Children in foster care require a high-quality service which is safe and well supported by social workers. Foster carers must be able to provide children with warm and nurturing relationships in order for them to achieve positive outcomes. Services must be well governed in order to produce these outcomes consistently.

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) is organised into four regions: the West, the South, Dublin Mid Leinster and Dublin North East. The regions are divided into 17 service areas, each of which provides a foster care service. The foster care services are managed by area managers working under a regional manager known as a service director. The service directors report to the chief operations officer, who is a member of the Tusla national management team.

## **HIQA Monitoring of TUSLA foster care services in 2017**

As part of the 2017 monitoring programme, HIQA carried out themed inspections of foster care services in 14 of the 17 Tusla service areas. The themed inspections focused on eight of the National Standards for foster care which covered safeguarding and child protection, recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers, foster care reviews and support and supervision of foster carers.

HIQA conducted themed foster care inspections in the Tusla Dublin North East Region between March and December 2017 in all four of the region's service areas: Dublin North City, Dublin North, Cavan/Monaghan and Louth/ Meath.

The levels of compliance found in themed foster care inspections conducted in 2017 in the Dublin North East region are represented in Table 1 overleaf.

Each area was required to submit an action plan to address findings of non-compliance as outlined in inspection reports. The reports and action plans were published on [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

**Table 1. Judgments of 2017 themed foster care inspections in the four service areas of the Tusla DNE Region**

Service area	Standard 10— Safeguarding and Child Protection	Standard 14a— GFC Assessments	Standard 14b— RFC Assessments	Standard 15 — Support and Supervision	Standard 16 — Training	Standard 17 — Reviews	Standard 21— Recruitment and Retention	Standard 23 — Foster Care Committee
Louth / Meath	Substantially compliant	Compliant	Substantially compliant	Substantially compliant	Substantially compliant	Non- compliant major	Substantially compliant	Substantially compliant
Dublin North	Non-compliant major	Substantially compliant	Non- compliant major	Substantially compliant	Non- compliant moderate	Non- - compliant major	Substantially compliant	Substantially compliant
Cavan/Monaghan	Non- compliant major	Substantially compliant	Non- compliant moderate	Non- compliant moderate	Non- compliant moderate	Non- compliant major	Non- compliant moderate	Non- compliant moderate
Dublin North City	Non- compliant major	Substantially compliant	Non- compliant major	Non- compliant major	Non- compliant moderate	Non- compliant major	Non- compliant major	Substantially compliant

Key to table

GFC = general foster carers (non-relative foster carers)

RFC = relative foster carers.

## HIQA follow up in 2018

HIQA carried out follow-up monitoring of the foster care services in all four of the service areas in the Dublin North East Region between June and July 2018. Based on the findings of the 2017 themed inspections, which focused on eight standards, and the resulting action plans, a statement of progress in the form of a self-assessment was completed by each service area. The self-assessment required:

- an assessment of the area's current level of compliance
- the extent to which progress had been made to address areas of non-compliance as identified during the 2017 themed inspection
- evidence to support the self-assessment findings
- outstanding actions required to address non-compliance
- and a statement as to how the area manager was assured that timely actions would be taken to address non-compliance, where applicable.

Following receipt of the completed statement of progress from the four service areas in the Dublin North East Region, the information was reviewed by an inspector. In order to source further evidence of progress made, HIQA conducted inspection fieldwork in the service areas where major non-compliances had been found during the 2017 inspections, namely, Dublin North, Dublin North City and Cavan/Monaghan.

A desktop review was carried out for the Louth/Meath service area. Following the review of the statement of progress, inspectors sought some additional information from the area manager to support the areas' judgments of its current compliance rating. This supporting information and documentation was reviewed by a HIQA inspector and a teleconference was conducted with the area manager for this area.

The focus of the follow-up inspections and the desktop review was to assess each area's progress in becoming compliant with the relevant standards, which included a particular focus on major and moderate non-compliances.

Following the completion of the desktop review and the follow-up fieldwork, HIQA interviewed the service director for the Dublin North East Region.

### **Foster care service in the Tusla Dublin North East Region**

The foster care teams in the areas of the Dublin North East were organised in different ways - some were based in one location, others were based in offices throughout the region. Teams were managed by team leaders who reported to principal social workers. The areas had both general and relative foster care households providing a service for children in care (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Numbers of general (non-relative) and relative foster carers in the Dublin North East Region in 2018**

Service area	General foster carers at time of follow up	Relative foster carers at time of follow up	Number of children in care <sup>1</sup>
Louth / Meath	92	83	375
Dublin North	121	82	309
Dublin North City	148	165	485
Cavan/ Monaghan	97	18	156

## Summary of findings

### Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services

Services promote the safety of children by protecting them from abuse and neglect and following policy and procedure in reporting any concerns of abuse and or neglect to the relevant authorities. Effective services ensure that the systems are in place to promote children’s welfare. Assessment and planning is central to the identification of children’s care needs. In order to provide the care children require, foster carers are assessed, approved and supported. Each child receives the supports they require to maintain their wellbeing.

### Standard 10 - Safeguarding and child protection

The 2017 themed inspection found substantial compliance in the Louth/Meath service area in relation to safeguarding and child protection. The areas for improvement related to the consistent implementation of the policy and procedures across the area in order to manage allegations, timely notifications to the foster care committee; An Garda Síochána (police) vetting was not up-dated for 25% of carers, and oversight of attendance at Children’s First training. In addition, safeguarding

<sup>1</sup>Tusla Monthly Reporting and Activity Data 2018 May (YTD)

arrangements for foster carers without an allocated link worker required improvement.

At the time of the 2017 Louth/Meath themed inspection, allegations were managed in line with Children First in one part of the area, but had only begun to be managed in line with Children First in another part of the area. The 2018 follow-up inspection found the Louth/Meath area had implemented effective systems to ensure that allegations were managed in line with Children First (2011) across the service area and these processes were now embedded into practice. The principal social worker had oversight of the management of allegations and serious concerns and she was monitoring the progress of these investigations. The area manager told inspectors that timely notifications were now being made to the Foster Care Committee. All foster carers were allocated at the time of the follow-up inspection.

On the 2018 follow-up inspection, all foster carers had up-to-date garda vetting. The statement of progress outlined that a register was now in place which incorporated a traffic light system which flagged when garda vetting was due to expire. In addition, quality assurance audited files and one of the areas they were auditing was garda vetting. The area manager outlined that all foster carers have now completed Children First training and relative carers would not be approved by the foster care committee without certification for this training.

The 2017 themed inspection found major non-compliances in the Cavan/Monaghan, Dublin North City and Dublin North service areas in relation to this standard. Improvement was required in the management of allegations and complaints in line with Children First (2011), notifications of allegations to the foster care committee were not timely and in some areas there were no records of notifications on files. Not all foster carers had attended Children First (2017) training. Safeguarding arrangements were not effective, such as the absence of garda vetting for foster carers and for household members aged 16 and over across all three areas. In Cavan/Monaghan, inspectors found that there was no evidence of garda vetting for two foster carers and this case was escalated to the area manager.

In these three areas (Dublin North, Dublin North City and Cavan/Monaghan), not all foster carers were allocated and safeguarding arrangements were not in place for unallocated carers. The monitoring of safety plans required improvement in Dublin North City. In Cavan/ Monaghan, safety plans had not been put in place when required.

While progress had been made in Dublin North in the 2018 follow-up inspection, some systems were in the early stages of development and inspectors found that some gaps in practice remained. On the follow-up inspection, all foster carers were allocated which was a significant improvement since the 2017 inspection.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that the area had put a number of oversight systems in place in order to oversee the management of allegations and complaints. These systems included a monthly area governance meeting in which the principal social worker for fostering, children in care and foster care committee chairperson attended. In addition, the fostering principal social worker assumed responsibility for the oversight of allegation and serious concerns. The foster care committee were being notified of all allegations and were tracking the progress of the management of allegations. However, inspectors found that notifications were not being sent to the foster care committee in a timely way.

Progress had been made in Dublin North in relation to the tracking of garda vetting for foster carers and the fostering register was now updated to include the status of garda vetting. This was also monitored at supervision between the team leader and the social worker and at monthly area governance meetings. However data provided by the area indicated that there were 12 foster carers who required up-to-date garda vetting at the time of the follow-up inspection. In addition, sufficient progress had not been made in relation to the oversight of the status of garda vetting for adult members of the household. Data provided by the area indicated that there were 28 adult members of foster care households who required garda vetting. The area identified that they were in the process of developing an over 16's tracking system for garda vetting.

Sufficient progress had not been made in order to ensure all foster carers had received training in Children First. At the time of the follow-up inspection, 173 of the 345 foster carers had not attended Children First training.

The 2018 follow-up inspection of Cavan/Monaghan found that some progress had been made in relation to the action plan; however this progress was not sufficient to increase the compliance rating to substantially compliant as suggested by the area.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that the area was using the Tusla Interim protocol for managing concerns and allegations of abuse and neglect. The area had taken steps such as the development of a practice document and a workshop with staff to ensure the protocol was consistently implemented. Inspectors found that allegations sampled were appropriately categorised and reports of allegations and serious concerns had been appropriately notified to the foster care committee.

The area had put a database in place in order to ensure effective and timely garda vetting and updated garda vetting which tracked the progress of vetting and included an alert to link workers when vetting was due for renewal. However, on the 2018 follow-up inspection there were 27 families that did not have up-to-date vetting.

Safety planning continued to require improvement in Cavan/Monaghan as inspectors found that safety plans were not appropriately reviewed or monitored. Inspectors

escalated this matter to the area manager and an appropriate written response was received. Other areas for improvement included the consideration of the need for a safety plan for other children as well as the child making the allegation in a placement when risks were identified and up-dated garda vetting for foster carers.

Insufficient progress had been made in relation to foster carer's attendance at Children First Training as 65 out of 115 foster carers had not attended this training by the time of the follow-up inspection.

The 2018 follow-up in Dublin North City inspection found all foster carers now had an allocated link worker which was a significant improvement on the previous inspection which found that nine foster carers had no link worker and three of these had not had a visit in the six months prior to the inspection. Allegations were managed in line with Children First. Inspectors found that the area had carried out the actions identified in their action plan and statement of progress, such as the circulation of memos to staff regarding the management of allegations and serious concerns. However, notifications of allegations sent to the foster care committee remained outside the required timeframe.

Systems of oversight in relation to garda vetting had improved but they were still in development. The oversight systems included the introduction of a tracker which gave managers greater oversight of garda vetting. However, some functions of this tracker were not fully developed at the time of the follow-up inspection. The area had also introduced monthly reports by team leaders in relation to status of garda vetting. Garda vetting was also a standing item on the agenda for area governance meetings. However, data provided by the area indicated that there were 32 foster carers who did not have up-to-date garda vetting. There were also 33 adult members of foster care households who required garda vetting. However inspectors identified a further foster family in which there were adults in the household who did not have garda vetting and this case was escalated by inspectors to the area manager.

Actions had been taken since the last inspection in order to improve the level of review of safety plans; however, these systems were not always effective as they did not ensure that all safety plans addressed the identified risk and were implemented and monitored.

Further areas for improvement included foster carer's completion of training in Children First (2017). Sufficient progress had not been made in relation to foster carer's attendance at Children First training as 273 out of 551 foster carers had not completed this training.

## **Regional summary for Standard 10**

Overall, in 2018, all areas in the Dublin North East region had made some progress in addressing areas of non-compliance identified during the 2017 inspection relating to safeguarding practices. However some actions had not been sufficiently progressed across the Dublin North East region to ensure:

- effective implementation and monitoring of safety plans,
- effective systems to ensure garda vetting were in place,
- all foster carers had attended Children First training (2017).

Three areas were found to be non-compliant major in the 2017 themed inspection, despite these findings, the actions agreed to improve compliance in these areas were not implemented consistently across the region.

There was evidence that some oversight systems had been implemented in order to promote the consistent use of the Interim protocol (2017) for managing serious concerns and allegation across the region. Oversight systems included trackers, audits and management meetings to oversee the management of allegations and serious concerns. Some of these systems were in the early stages of development. The service director told inspectors that regionally the system that was put in place to track allegations of abuse against foster carers would be put in place throughout the region. The principal social worker from Louth/Meath had presented this at the regional fostering forum.

There remained some gaps in safety planning in the two areas where this had already been identified as a gap in the 2017 inspections. In Cavan/Monaghan, there remained gaps in the review and monitoring of safety planning. In Dublin North City, steps were taken to improve the review of safety plans but systems in place did not ensure that all safety plans addressed risk, or were monitored to ensure effectiveness.

The service director told inspectors that the area was in the process of developing a standardised template across the region in relation to safety planning and that gaps identified in the 2018 inspection have been addressed with relevant service areas. In addition, a training event had been scheduled in the area relating to safety planning for all service areas across the region in order to improve and promote consistent practice.

Across the region, systems had been developed in order to improve oversight of garda vetting for foster carers. However, some systems were at different stages of development and actions to address this deficit were not consistently implemented across the region. In Louth/Meath quality assurance audited files and one of the areas they were auditing was garda vetting. However this audit was not replicated across the region. Garda vetting of adult members of the household remained a deficit in three of the four areas.

Foster carer's attendance at Children First training had not been sufficiently progressed across the region. In Louth/Meath, all foster carers had attended this training, however this remained a deficit across the other three areas in the region, Inspectors also found that there were different methods used in each area in order to promote foster carers attendance at this training.

The service director acknowledged that garda vetting for over 16's and adult members of the foster care household was a challenge in the region and that this was in the early stages of development. However she was assured that systems were now in place and progress was being made across the region in this area.

The service director received a report from each area in relation to the action plan and she was aware of the challenges across the region in relation to the level of attendance at Children First training. She told inspectors that efforts had been made across the region to ensure foster carers attendance at Children First training. For example, a letter had been issued from the service director's office to foster carers in order to promote the increase of attendance at this training. Regionally she advised that they were ensuring that wherever a Children First course was held across the region that foster carers from all areas could attend. In instances where there were difficulties in their attendance at training, social workers will be facilitating individual sessions with carers in order to complete this training. The service director maintains oversight of the figures in relation to the attendance at this training through reporting from the quality and risk manager.

#### **Standard 14a — Assessment and approval of non-relative foster carers**

In 2017, the themed inspections found that one area, Louth/Meath was compliant and three areas in the region were substantially compliant. These areas were progressing their action plans to reach full compliance with this standard.

#### **Standard 14b — Assessment and approval of relative foster carer**

The 2017 themed inspections found substantial compliance in the Louth/Meath service area in relation to the assessment and approval of relative foster carers. However, improvement was required in relative assessments being carried out in a timely manner and contracts for relative foster carers being placed on file.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that the area continued to be substantially compliant with this standard. However, it remained that the Louth/Meath area was not sufficiently resourced to ensure relative assessments were completed in a timely manner, and as a result the area had contracted some of their relative assessments out to a private agency for completion. Progress had been made in relation to the oversight of assessments and the principal social worker had recently begun tracking

relative assessments on a register to enable her to monitor and oversee the progress of assessments. The area manager told inspectors that strategy meetings were held and risk escalations were completed in instances where children were placed with relative foster carers who had not been assessed. At the time of the 2018 inspection, there were 15 relative assessments which were in the process of being assessed. The area manager told inspectors that seven of those were being undertaken by a private fostering agency in an effort to have them completed in a timely way. The statement of progress identified that all relative carers now had a contract on file.

The 2017 themed foster care inspection of the Cavan/Monaghan service area had found moderate non-compliance in relation to the assessment of relative carers. Improvement was required in relation to records of pre-placement checks on files and delays in completing some relative assessments.

On the 2018 inspection, inspectors found that the Cavan/Monaghan area was not sufficiently resourced to ensure that relative assessments were always completed in timely manner. At the time of the 2017 themed inspection, there were three relative carers who were not assessed. No relative carers had been approved since the 2017 inspection and there were two additional carers since that inspection. At the time of the follow-up inspection, there were five relative carers with children placed with them who had not been approved. Three assessments were awaiting approval by the foster care committee. Two of those assessments were on a waiting list to be completed by a private agency. On review of three files, inspectors found that there were delays in commencing and progressing assessments. There was improved oversight of relative assessments as they were on the agenda at area governance meetings and were also discussed in supervision with the link workers. However, some actions agreed in 2017 had not been completed in order to improve oversight in the area such as the notification to the foster care committee of delays in completing assessments in order to allow the committee to monitor assessments. Actions had been taken in the area to ensure that records of pre-placements checks were on foster carer's files.

The 2017 themed inspections found major non-compliance in the Dublin North and the Dublin North City service areas. Improvements were required due to the significant delay in completing assessments of relative foster carers and presenting them to the foster care committees, lack of a system to track and progress relative foster care assessments, contracts in place for relative carers, Children First training at point of approval and the lack of a system to ensure this training was completed post approval.

On the 2018 follow-up inspection, inspectors found that in Dublin North city, some improvements had been made in relation to this standard. Oversight systems had been put in place in order to manage the progress of relative assessments such as management meetings and the use of a tracker. The rationale for delays in

assessments was recorded and plans were developed for the completion of assessments. Despite this, the follow-up inspection found that timelines for relative assessments remained a challenge. Three assessments had been completed since the last inspection. However, since the 2017 inspection, there were 13 carers who had children placed with them who had not been assessed, which included six new carers since the last inspection. Thirteen of these were undergoing assessment at the time of the follow up inspection. One was on a waiting list for an assessment and one was assessed however it was awaiting approval by the foster care committee.

The area identified that the foster care committee now ensured that relative carers had Children First training and agreed dates to attend fostering relations training. The foster care committee now monitors this to ensure training is completed by all carers. There were some improvements made in relation to the principal social workers sign-off on emergency placements. However, inspectors identified one out of four emergency placements which had not been signed off by the principal social worker.

In Dublin North there were increased oversight systems in place to oversee relative carers who were not approved by the foster care committee. The principal social worker had assumed responsibility for the management of relative foster care assessments and tracked the timelines of assessments. There remained two long standing assessments to be completed since the 2017 inspection. There were an additional six relative assessments on-going at the time of the 2018 follow-up inspection. The principal social worker had oversight of these assessments and she had to approve any extension for assessments when there was a delay in completion. Assessments were also monitored through discussions at area governance meetings. Notifications were also made to the foster care committee when these placements were made. However, similar to Cavan/Monaghan delays were not notified to the foster care committee when there was a delay in the completion of the assessment in line with the action plan submitted by the area in 2017.

The area identified that a review had been undertaken with respect to contracts and 100% of foster carer's files now had contracts.

### **Regional Summary Standard 14(b)**

Overall in 2018, progress had been made and it was evident that systems were implemented in order to improve the monitoring and oversight of relative care assessments. However, there remained significant challenges in the completion of relative assessments in the four areas in the region. These systems included a tracker, notification to the foster care committee and discussion at area governance

meetings. However, it remained that in Cavan/Monaghan and Dublin North, the foster care committee had not been formally notified of delays in completing assessments in order to maintain oversight of the progress of relative assessments when delays occurred in line with the 2017 action plan provided by the areas.

Steps were taken to improve pre-placement checks where it had been identified as a gap in the 2017 inspections. While monitoring of relative assessments had improved across the region with tracker systems, the service director acknowledged that the completion of relative assessments in line with the required 16 week timeframe remained a significant challenge in the region. In order to reach compliance in this area, the areas were sourcing a private agency to complete assessments, however there remained delays.

The service director identified that assessments will be further monitored through supervision and an audit will be completed of supervision. The service director advised inspectors that she is planning a pilot project in which an international organisation was being sourced in order to assist in the recruitment of foster carers. The service director anticipated that a new team would be established in the region in order to recruit and assess foster carers regionally. Four social work posts will be on this team to report to a team leader. It is anticipated that going forward, all the required paperwork for example, garda vetting and medicals will have been sourced by the external provider and on file prior to the social worker commencing assessments which it is hoped will facilitate the completion of assessments within the 16 week timeframe.

## **Standard 15 – Supervision and support of foster carers**

In the 2017 themed inspection, there were two service areas which were substantially compliant with this standard (Dublin North and Louth/Meath). Areas for improvement included the timely support and training for carers looking after children with complex needs and supports to prevent placement breakdowns.

The 2017 inspection in Cavan/Monaghan found moderate non-compliance in relation to this standard and the Dublin North City inspection found major non-compliance in this standard. In Cavan/Monaghan, not all foster carers had an allocated link worker; foster carers had not received regular support visits and did not receive formal supervision. In Dublin North City not all foster carers were allocated and improvement was required in the management of unallocated cases, the quality and recording of supervision and support visits. There was no out-of-hours service across the region.

In 2018, the statement of progress indicated that in the both the Dublin North and Louth/Meath areas progress had been made. In Louth/Meath, a number of

developments resulted in improved support for foster carers looking after children with complex needs. In Dublin North, the statement of progress identified that all foster carers were allocated a link worker who carries out twice yearly visits. There were oversight systems in place to ensure that the foster carers were receiving regular visits.

In the Dublin North City Service Area, inspectors found in the 2018 follow-up inspection that improvements had been made which indicated that they had made progress in reaching compliance; however further improvement was required. All foster carers were allocated a link worker which again was a significant improvement. The team had started to use a template for recording supervision and training was provided in relation to supervision of foster carers. The quality of supervision of foster carers was being audited by the regional manager and there was also improved oversight by team leaders. Inspectors found that the quality of supervision had improved but this was not consistent across the team. Further areas for improvement related to the regularity of case management. While there was improved oversight of support and supervision provided by link worker to foster carers, it did not take place consistently on a bi-monthly basis.

In Cavan/Monaghan, some actions had been progressed in line with their action plan; however, progress was insufficient and the area remained non-compliant with this standard. The area identified in their dataset that all foster families were allocated a link social worker. However the areas statement of progress identified that there remained 15 foster families who were not allocated a link social worker. As a result, support was being provided to these families by a social care worker. Since the 2017 inspection the area had agreed to implement specific quality assurance and supervision arrangements with regard to this arrangement. However, inspectors identified that these measures were not being adhered to as one of these foster carers was also dual unallocated, in that the child in the placement also did not have an allocated social worker. As a result, this case was escalated to the area manager.

The area was starting to record support and supervision provided by link workers to foster carers. There was improved oversight of supervision and support and the principal social worker had completed audits of supervision. However the quality of supervision was mixed on some files. Supervision templates had only been recently used; therefore, it was difficult to assess the quality of supervision provided on the follow-up inspection. On the 2018 follow-up fieldwork, inspectors identified that some supervision templates were completed based on a phone call to the foster carers in lieu of a visit which was not in line with good practice. This matter was brought also to the attention of the principal social worker and the area manager.

## **Regional Summary Standard 15**

Overall, in 2018, across the region, all areas had made some progress in relation to the implementation of a standardised support and supervision template in order to promote good practice and consistent supervision of foster carers, and areas were beginning to formally record support and supervision using this template. There was also improved oversight of support and supervision. However, these monitoring systems were not always effective in Dublin North and Cavan/Monaghan.

Foster carers were allocated a link worker in three of the four areas since the themed inspection which was a significant improvement. However, this was not consistent across the region and in Cavan /Monaghan, it remained that there were 15 families who did not have an allocated social worker. The service director at interview outlined that all these foster carers in Cavan/Monaghan should all be allocated as she had directed the area manager in this regard. She also outlined that there was no excuse in Cavan/Monaghan for telephone calls to take place in lieu of supervision visits to foster carers.

The service director acknowledged the findings of the follow-up inspection and has addressed the areas for improvement in particular, the allocation of social workers to foster carers and the quality of support and supervision with the area managers in areas where gaps had been identified. The service director assured inspectors that all carers were now allocated across the region including Cavan/Monaghan. The quality and risk manager and team leaders will be completing audits in this area and a regional training day will be scheduled on the topic of auditing against the standards to ensure consistency across the region.

The service director told inspectors that the lack of an out-of-hours service for foster carers is a national issue being progressed by Tusla and which the national office have indicated will be due for completion by quarter three in 2018, subject to successful negotiations with unions.

## **Standard 16 —Training**

The 2017 themed inspections found that one service area, Louth/Meath, was substantially compliant with this standard. Areas for further improvement included the development of a training needs analysis, training strategy, the overall training records of foster carers and the individual training records of carers. While this area had implemented a central system to enable oversight of foster carer's attendance at training, this was not implemented in one of the two offices in the area. In addition, individual training records were mixed as they were available on some files but not on all files reviewed by inspectors.

The 2017 themed inspection found moderate non-compliances with this standard in three areas, Dublin North, Dublin North City and Cavan/ Monaghan. While areas for improvement were similar to those of Louth/ Meath, the gaps were more prominent in these three areas. Although, it was noted that Dublin North City had training needs analysis and training strategy in the 2017 inspection. However, in Dublin North City and Dublin North, some foster carers had not attended fostering relations training and there were no systems in place to ensure foster carers attended this training. In Cavan/Monaghan, foster carers were not attending on-going training. In addition, individual training records on files were poor and overall training records were not available across these three areas.

The 2018 follow-up inspection of the Louth/Meath area found that they had completed a training needs analysis since the 2017 inspection; however it had not included consideration of foster care reviews and learning from the foster care committee, as outlined in their 2017 action plan. However, feedback from foster carers was incorporated when determining how the training should be delivered in order to promote foster carers attendance. A training strategy had been developed. A training register was in operation which facilitated greater oversight of attendance by foster carers at training. However further actions were required in order to ensure individual training records were up-to-date on all foster carers files.

In 2018, the statement of progress completed by the Dublin North area indicated that they had completed some actions agreed in the 2017 action plan. However further improvements were required in order to bring the area fully into compliance. Oversight of training had improved as a system had been developed to record training, which gave an overview of all training attended by foster carers and training was also on the agenda at area governance meetings. There was a dedicated training officer in the area that developed a training needs analysis. However, the training strategy was still in development.

The area continued to struggle to ensure that relative carers received foundational training. The statement of progress identified that two training dates had been secured; however the level of attendance of foster carers remained low. Action had not yet been taken in line with the 2017 action plan as the area had indicated that they would complete individual work with those carers who had not completed foundational training, but this had not been completed for any of these foster carers by the time of the 2018 follow up inspection. The area identified in the statement of progress that this action would be completed by quarter three 2018.

In the Cavan/Monaghan Service Area, improvements had been made to reach compliance with this standard. The area had completed a training needs analysis and a training strategy was in place for ensuring that foster carers attended training. A database of training was maintained which facilitated oversight of training and files

were being audited by the principal social worker. Oversight of training had also improved and training was on the agenda of the area governance group meetings. Inspectors found that training records on individual foster carer's files had also improved.

In the Dublin North City Area, inspectors found some actions were completed in relation to this standard. A training strategy had been updated and the area had submitted a business case for a trainer from the workforce learning and development department to be made available to the area. A text alert system had been developed to remind carers about upcoming training events; however attendance at training remained low. The central training records had improved and were overseen by the team leaders and the principal social workers. Two actions were yet to be completed in full but were not due for completion by the time of the follow up inspection; these actions related to the identification of training needs through the process of foster care reviews which was not due for completion until March 2019. As a result, this action could not be assessed on the follow-up inspection. The other action related to the review of all training records to ensure a standardised template was used to record supervision by the end of July 2018. While inspectors found that progress had been made in this regard, further progress was required.

### **Regional Summary Standard 16**

Overall, in the 2018 follow-up inspections, all areas had made significant progress and were working through the actions outlined in their action plans to improve their compliance with this standard. There had been an improvement in the completion of a training needs analysis in all of the areas (Louth/Meath, Dublin North, and Cavan/Monaghan) where it had been identified as an action to address gaps. A training strategy had been developed in two of the three areas (Louth/Meath, and Cavan/Monaghan) where this had previously been identified as a gap in the 2017 inspection. In Dublin North, there was a training need analysis completed however, the training strategy for 2018 was still in development.

The service areas central training records for foster carers had improved in order to allow for management oversight of training in all areas (Dublin North City, Cavan/Monaghan, and Louth/Meath) where this was previously identified as a deficit. In Cavan/ Monaghan, individual training records had improved. However, in Dublin North City and Louth/Meath, individual training records on foster carer's files required further improvement.

The service director told inspectors that training was now on the agenda at area governance meetings in order to monitor this across the areas.

## Standard 17 – Reviews

In the 2017 themed foster care inspections, major non-compliances were found across all areas in the region for this standard. The deficits identified in the 2017 inspections related to the significant number of foster carers who had not had a review in over three years, and the tracking and implementation of recommendations from reviews. In addition, areas were not routinely conducting reviews following a report of an allegation or serious concern made against foster carers.

In 2018, the statement of progress provided by all areas identified that two of the four areas had made significant progress in relation to this standard. However, in two areas insufficient progress had been made in the completion of reviews in order to improve their compliance under this standard.

In 2017 in Louth/Meath, 118 foster carers had not been reviewed in over three years. In the 2018 follow-up inspection, the Louth/Meath service area identified that 120 reviews had taken place since the 2017 themed inspection which was the agreed target they had set out in their action plan. Further reviews had arisen outside of the initial number outlined in their initial action plan, and as a result there were 39 additional reviews to be completed at the time of the follow-up inspection, 26 of which were 12 month reviews. The area manager told inspectors that there were sufficient resources in place to maintain updated reviews on an on-going basis. The oversight of the implementation of recommendations of reviews had also improved as they were tracked by a principal social worker and the secretary of the foster care committee. An additional part-time team leader position was required to monitor the implementation of recommendations. The principal social worker also identified that she completed audits of reviews and recommendations.

In Dublin North at the time of the 2017 inspection, 155 foster carers had not had a review in over three years. In the 2018 follow up inspection, 77% (102 of 155) foster care reviews had been completed. There remained 37 foster carer households that had not had a review in over three years. The area identified that a plan was in place to have those reviews completed by quarter three of 2018. The progress of reviews was also monitored through a tracker for reviews. The statement of progress identified that priority was given to reviews required following an allegation or serious concern. Recommendations from reviews were now being tracked and monitored during supervision sessions with team leaders. However, the area identified that an audit of reviews which was due to be completed in January 2018 had not been completed at the time of the follow up inspection in July 2018.

In 2017, in the Cavan/Monaghan service area 52 out of 113 foster carers had not had a review in over three years. The 2018 follow up inspection in the Cavan/Monaghan area found that there remained 36.5 % (42 out of 113) of foster

carers awaiting a review for over three years. While steps had been taken to make progress under this standard, inspectors were not satisfied that sufficient progress had been made to bring the area into compliance with the standard. An electronic monitoring and oversight system was in place to assist with the management of reviews. The area manager had a plan for progressing foster care reviews and the statement of progress identified that funding had been approved to outsource some reviews so that the deadline of April 2019 outlined in their action plan could be reached. On the 2018 follow-up fieldwork, inspectors found that the quality of reviews had improved and all relevant documentation was included for the review.

In 2017 in Dublin North City, 304 of foster carers had not had a review in the previous three years. In the 2018 Dublin North City follow-up inspection, there was also insufficient progress made in relation to the timely completion of reviews of foster carers. On the 2018 follow up inspection, 81 % (253) foster carers had not had a review in over three years. The area manager identified that there had been delays in commencing reviews as the team had to firstly develop a plan and put structures in place for the reviews to commence. The deadline outlined in their action plan was that all foster care reviews were to be completed by 31 March 2019. However, the area was not sufficiently resourced to complete these reviews. A tendering process was underway for a private provider to assist in completing these reviews. Foster care reviews had been prioritised based on criteria developed by the area, for example when there was an allegation against a foster carer. The quality of reviews had improved, for example, consideration was given to the supports required, foster carer's current circumstances and the views of children, however further improvements were required such as the level of consultation with parents and the quality of recommendations made at reviews.

### **Regional Summary Standard 17**

Overall, there were variances across the region with respect to the completion of reviews. Two areas had made significant progress; however two areas had not made adequate progress with respect to the completion of outstanding reviews. Dublin North City and Cavan Monaghan had not adequately progressed reviews, to the same extent as the other areas in the region. The service director outlined that she was reviewing the plan regarding reviews in Cavan/Monaghan along with the area manager and that they should meet the date of the action plan submitted. At the time of the follow-up inspections, there remained 371 foster carers whose reviews were outstanding in the Dublin North East region.

Progress had been made in relation to the quality of reviews of foster carers. However further improvements were required in the quality of reviews in Dublin North City. Systems had been put in place in the three areas to allow for tracking of recommendations from reviews where this had been identified as a deficit

(Louth/Meath, Cavan/Monaghan, and Dublin North) in the 2017 inspection. However, inspectors found that there were different systems used in each area, for example in Louth/Meath, the principal social worker had audited review recommendations and they were tracked by a principal social worker and the secretary of the foster care committee. In Dublin North recommendations from reviews were now being tracked and monitored during supervision sessions with team leaders.

In Dublin North, significant progress had been made in relation to the completion of reviews and 77% of reviews had now been completed. Similarly in Louth/Meath, significant progress had been made since the themed inspection. However in Dublin North City, insufficient progress had been made and 81% of those who required a foster care review remained outstanding. A schedule of reviews was drawn up for completion by the end of March 2019. In Cavan/Monaghan, progress had been made in relation to reviews; however this progress was insufficient and there remained 35% of foster care households that had not had a review in over three years.

The service director identified that the number of outstanding reviews in Dublin North City was one of the main risks in region. She identified that staffing in the Dublin North City area was contributing to this level of non-compliance. The area was not sufficiently resourced to complete these reviews. A tendering process was underway for a private provider to assist in completing these reviews. The service director was in the process of outsourcing 50 reviews to a private company however; this was delayed due to the procurement process, and the service director was unable to provide a timescale for completion of the procurement process. It was anticipated that once this was finalised the area should reach compliance in relation to this standard, but was also clear that without additional resources the area would not be able to complete all foster care reviews by March 2019. In Cavan/Monaghan, a fostering principal social worker had been recently appointed to the team and the service director told inspectors that the area should have these reviews completed within their own resources by June 2019 in line with the 2017 action plan. While there was an improvement in the quality of reviews and the implementation of recommendations from reviews, it was not evident that there was a regional approach to ensure there was consistency across all areas in relation to the quality of reviews and in relation to the tracking of the implementation of recommendations.

#### **Theme 4: Leadership, Governance and Management**

Effective governance is achieved by planning and directing activities, using good business practices, accountability and integrity. In an effective governance structure, there are clear lines of accountability at individual, team and service levels and all staff working in the service are aware of their responsibilities. Risks to the service as well as to individuals are well managed and the system is subject to a rigorous quality assurance system. Services provided on behalf of the area are robustly monitored. The Foster Care Committee is a robust mechanism for approving both placements and foster care applications.

#### **Standard 23 – The Foster Care Committee (FCC)**

The 2017 inspections found that the Louth/Meath, Dublin North City and Dublin North service areas were substantially compliant with this standard. Areas for improvement included the systems in place to track the progress of allegations, the committee's acknowledgement of notifications, a member of voluntary organisation was not on the committee as required in Louth/Meath, training available to members of the committee and the up-to-date garda vetting of committee members.

The 2017 inspection of one area, namely Cavan /Monaghan found moderate non-compliance with this standard. Areas for improvements included the lack of systems in place for the committee to track the progress of allegations against foster carer's, lack of up-to-date garda vetting for foster care committee members and the approval of relative foster carers pending their completion of foundational training.

In the 2018 follow-up inspection, the Louth/Meath Service Area, identified in the statement of progress that the foster care committee was now tracking allegations and disruption reports, and exit interviews were now being notified to the foster care committee. However, further actions were required in order to bring the area into compliance. The area was still in the process of seeking a member of a voluntary organisation to sit on the foster care committee. Garda vetting remained outstanding for two members of the foster care committee and was being progressed at the time of the follow-up inspection. Some training had been provided to committee members, however further planned training had not occurred by the time of the follow-up inspection.

In the 2018 follow-up inspection the Dublin North area had taken actions to improve their compliance with the standard. The chair of the foster care committee formally acknowledged receipt of initial notifications in line with their action plan. In addition, the chair of the foster care committee tracked the progress of investigations. There was also a quarterly meeting held with the chair of the foster care committee and

the principal social worker which facilitated the oversight of investigations of allegations.

In 2018 inspectors found that Dublin North City indicated that the foster care committee chair was tracking assessments and investigations of concerns and allegations. The committee was also ensuring that where fostering relations training was not attended by relative carers there must be a date scheduled for attendance included on the assessment. Children First training was also now required prior to approval by the foster care committee. Inspectors found that there was progress in relation to notifications being sent to the foster care committee and the acknowledgement of same but further improvements were needed. Of the three files reviewed, all notifications were sent to the committee but acknowledgements were not on files. The chair of the foster care committee told inspectors that she had reviewed acknowledgements and found that all but three notifications has been acknowledged by the committee since the last inspection.

The 2018 follow-up inspections found improvements in the Cavan/Monaghan area under this standard. However further improvement was required in order to bring the area into compliance as some actions taken were in the early stages of development. A new chair of the foster care committee had been appointed prior to the follow-up inspection. There was an induction, training and development day planned in September 2018 for members of the committee. The quality manager in the area assured inspectors that all foster care committee members had up-to-date garda vetting. Minutes of the foster care committee meetings reflected notifications to the foster care committee in relation to allegations and serious concerns. The chair of the committee was clear about their responsibilities which included plans for monitoring and oversight mechanisms for allegations and timelines for assessments.

### **Regional Summary Standard 23**

Overall, across the region, progress had been made in relation to this standard, however further action needed to be progressed in order to for the area to achieve full compliance.

Across the region the foster care committees were notified of allegations and these were now tracked by the foster care committees. However, in Cavan/Monaghan, these systems were not yet developed in the same way that other committees were tracking investigations of allegations. The recent appointment of a new chair of the foster care committee in Cavan/Monaghan prior to the follow-up inspection resulted in delays in progressing some of the actions agreed in the 2017 inspection.

The service director told inspectors that the quality and risk manager was now responsible for tracking the status of garda vetting for all foster care committee members across the region. The service director receives an annual report from the foster care committee. However, she does not have oversight of the foster care

committees in each area as this was delegated to the area manager in each area. Therefore, there was a lack of oversight at a regional level in order to promote consistency in the operation of the foster care committees across the region.

## **Theme 5: Use of Resources**

Services recruit sufficient foster carers to meet the needs of children in the area. Foster carers stay with the service and continue to offer placements to children.

### **Standard 21 — Retention and recruitment of foster carers**

In 2017, two areas were substantially compliant with this standard, namely Louth/Meath and Dublin North. Areas for improvement included addressing the insufficient number of foster carers to meet the demands of the service and the development of a recruitment strategy.

A regional foster care recruitment strategy was still in development at the time of the 2018 statement of progress being completed, as outlined in their action plan.

In 2018, the follow-up inspections found that in Louth/Meath efforts had been made by staff to recruit within the community. The area continued to work with the regional team in relation to the recruitment of general foster carers. In addition, the regional team were beginning to work with a private company to try and increase recruitment of foster carers.

In 2018, the Dublin North area identified that the regional fostering team were ensuring that there were regular recruitment campaigns. A private fostering team was also working with the regional team in order to recruit and train foster carers. In order to supplement this, the area had completed local recruitment campaigns. The area manager was in the process of identifying an international provider in the field of recruitment to assist in the recruitment of foster carers. A local recruitment strategy had been developed in May 2018.

In 2017, moderate non-compliance with the standard was found in the Cavan/Monaghan Service Area. The areas for improvement related to the number of foster care placements available in the area, and there was no overall retention strategy.

In the 2018 follow-up inspection, inspectors found that the area had not yet developed a retention strategy. However, some actions had been taken such as an on-going training programme was now in place, support groups were held on a six weekly basis and additional supports were provided to foster carers based on assessed needs.

While there were not sufficient foster care placements, the area had taken some steps to address this including contacting foster carers to request referrals for prospective foster carers. Further areas requiring actions in Cavan/Monaghan included the development of initiatives to recruit a range of foster carers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

In the 2017 inspection, major non-compliance was found in the Dublin North City area under this standard, as there were not enough foster carers to meet the demands in the area. In the 2018 follow-up inspection, inspectors found that the area had developed a retention and recruitment strategy. The area continued to have insufficient placements to meet the demands of the service. A team had been developed who were dedicated solely to the recruitment of foster carers. The statement of progress also noted that the area planned to work with a private company in an effort to supplement their recruitment strategy.

### **Regional Summary Standard 21**

Overall, in 2018 the insufficient number and range of foster carers in place to meet the demands of the service continued to be a challenge in the region. Across the region efforts had been made in relation to the recruitment of foster carers, however despite efforts made to recruit foster carers, this standard remained a deficit and all of the areas levels of compliance remained the same as identified in the 2017 inspection. In Dublin North, Louth/Meath and Dublin North City, the regional teams were starting to work with a private company in order to make progress in this area.

A regional foster care recruitment strategy was still in development and had not been completed in line with the timelines identified in their 2017 action plan. In Cavan/Monaghan, the area had not yet developed a retention strategy as outlined in their action plan.

The service director acknowledged that recruitment remained a challenge across the region and this was partially due to the geography of the region. Going forward the service director was in the early stages of developing a pilot project which involved setting up a regional team who will be responsible for recruitment of foster carers. The service director was also sourcing an international provider to assist in the recruitment of foster carer in the region. It was anticipated that a principal social worker would lead out on this team and they had four social work posts allocated to this team. There will be an administrator in the region that will screen all enquiries.

In addition the service director told inspectors that she wanted a regional panel of foster carers, so that if a child in Dublin North City required a placement for example, and there was none available in that area, that they would be placed in a suitable placement within the region. While acknowledging that it is better for a child to be placed within their own community, taking a regional approach would mean that they would still remain within the region.

The service director told inspectors that all areas in the region continued to ensure retention of foster carers through the 100% allocation of link worker to foster carers and ensuring training was available to foster carers.

## Conclusion

There were some positive developments across the region since the themed inspections in 2017. The service director had established governance and accountability structures in each area which facilitated monitoring and oversight of the services provided. There had been newly appointed principal social workers in Cavan/Monaghan, Dublin North, and Dublin North city. Since the 2017 inspections there was now:

- monthly area governance group meetings
- quarterly regional governance group meetings
- a regional quality assurance and risk manager in the Dublin North East region
- a monthly reporting mechanism by the regional quality assurance and risk manager to the service director in relation to action plans
- a regional document to outline what was required to reach compliance in each of the standards to ensure consistency.

The purpose of the area governance group was to ensure compliance with the standards, to enhance coordination between local, regional and national fostering teams, to hold managers to account, to ensure integration of all fostering teams, and to oversee quality assurance steps to ensure a quality service was delivered.

There was evidence of shared learning among the areas and some systems were implemented in all areas such as the mechanisms of tracking of garda vetting for foster carers, tracking of foster carer's attendance at training and monitoring of allegations and serious concerns. Furthermore, the area had consistently started to use the supervision and support template across the region.

However, some of these systems were at different stages of development across the region. The tracking of garda vetting for adult members of the household had not been sufficiently progressed across the region. While some progress had been made in relation to foster carers attendance at Children First training this was not consistently progressed across the region.

All areas had implemented oversight systems in order to monitor and oversee the management of complaints and investigations. However, where an issue had been identified with the quality of safety plans in 2017, similar findings were identified in the 2018 follow-up inspections and oversight of these plans was not effective.

The service director told inspectors that quarterly regional meetings facilitated the areas to share the good practice found in one area with the other areas in the region. This was evident in some systems developed for example, the use of

trackers in order to monitor the management of allegations and concerns. However, it remained that reviews of foster carers had not been progressed consistently across the region, for example Dublin North City and Cavan Monaghan had not adequately progressed reviews, to the same extent as the other areas in the region. At the time of the follow-up inspections, there remained 371 foster carers whose reviews were outstanding in the Dublin North East region.

The service director identified that resources was an issue in the Dublin North City area which had an influence on the areas ability to reach compliance in some of the standards. At the time of the follow-up inspections, there was instability in the management team in the Dublin North City area and there were five vacant posts across the service. One of those posts was the principal social worker position and a principal social worker from another area had moved a month before the inspection to support the team on an interim basis. The interim area manager and foster care committee chair were covering responsibilities related to the vacant principal social worker position. However, resources were not identified as a deficit in the other three areas in the region.

Inspectors found that some area managers judged their level of compliance as having sufficiently improved in order to increase improve their compliance rating, however inspectors disagreed with these compliance ratings. For example, Dublin North and Cavan/Monaghan had judged themselves as substantially compliant in safeguarding and protection when sufficient progress had not been made to ensure that all foster carers had attended Children First (2017) training and that systems were in place to ensure effective and timely garda vetting was sought for foster families. In addition, one area Cavan/Monaghan judged themselves as having an improved compliance rating in reviews of foster carers when sufficient progress had not been made in the completion of reviews. However, the service director was aware of the areas that required immediate action and she assured inspectors that a plan was in place to complete foster care reviews in line with the 2017 action plans, but was also clear that without additional resources the Dublin North City area would not be able to complete all foster care reviews by March 2019.

HIQA will continue to monitor the progress in the Dublin North East region through each areas action plan and in particular will continue to seek updates in relation to the areas of major non-compliance in Dublin North City.

## Appendix 1 – Standards and regulations for statutory foster care services

<b><i>National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)</i></b>
<b>Theme 1: Child-centred Services</b>
<p><b>Standard 1: Positive sense of identity</b> Children and young people are provided with foster care services that promote positive sense of identity for them.</p>
<p><b>Standard 2: Family and friends</b> Children and young people in foster care are encouraged and facilitated to maintain and develop family relationships and friendships.</p>
<p><b>Standard 3: Children’s Rights</b> 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.</p>
<p><b>Standard 4: Valuing diversity</b> 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> <p><b><i>Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995</i></b> <i>Part III Article 8 Religion</i></p>
<p><b>Standard 25: Representations and complaints</b> Health boards<sup>¥</sup> 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.</p>

<sup>¥</sup>Where reference is made to Health Boards these services are now provided by the Child and Family Agency.

## ***National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)***

### **Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services**

#### **Standard 5: The child and family social worker**

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

***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part IV, Article 17(1) Supervision and visiting of children*

#### **Standard 6: Assessment of children and young people**

An assessment of the child's or young person's needs is made prior to any placement or, in the case of emergencies, as soon as possible thereafter.

***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part III, Article 6: Assessment of circumstances of child*

#### **Standard 7: Care planning and review**

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.

***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part III, Article 11: Care plans*  
*Part IV, Article 18: Review of cases*  
*Part IV, Article 19: Special review*

#### **Standard 8: Matching carers with children and young people**

Children and young people are placed with carers who are chosen for their capacity to meet the assessed needs of the children or young people.

***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part III, Article 7: Capacity of foster parents to meet the needs of child*

***Child Care (Placement of Children with Relatives) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part III, Article 7: Assessment of circumstances of the child*

## ***National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)***

### **Standard 9: A safe and positive environment**

Foster carers' homes provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for the children or young people.

### **Standard 10: Safeguarding and child protection**

Children and young people in foster care are protected from abuse and neglect.

### **Standard 13: Preparation for leaving care and adult life**

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.

### **Standard 14a: Assessment and approval of non-relative foster carers**

Foster care applicants participate in a comprehensive assessment of their ability to carry out the fostering task and are formally approved by the health board<sup>2</sup> prior to any child or young person being placed with them.

#### ***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***

*Part III, Article 5 Assessment of foster parents*

*Part III, Article 9 Contract*

### **14b. Assessment and approval of relative foster carers**

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 health board.

#### ***Child Care (Placement of Children with Relatives) Regulations, 1995***

*Part III, Article 5 Assessment of relatives*

*Part III, Article 9 Contract*

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<sup>2</sup>Formally health boards at the time of writing the Standards, now The Child and Family Agency (Tusla).

***National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)***

**Standard 15: Supervision and support**

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.

**Standard 16: Training**

Foster carers participate in the training necessary to equip them with the skills and knowledge required to provide high-quality care.

**Standard 17: Reviews of foster carers**

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.

**Standard 22: Special Foster care**

Health boards provide for a special foster care service for children and young people with serious behavioural difficulties.

### **Theme 3: Health and Development**

#### **Standard 11: Health and development**

The health and developmental needs of children and young people in foster care are assessed and met. They are given information, guidance and support to make appropriate choices in relation to their health and development.

#### ***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***

*Part III, Article 6 Assessment of circumstances of child*

*Part IV, Article 16 (2)(d) Duties of foster parents*

#### **Standard 12: Education**

The educational needs of children and young people in foster care are given high priority and they are encouraged to attain their full potential. Education is understood to include the development of social and life skills.

### **Theme 4: Leadership, Governance and Management**

#### **Standard 18: Effective policies**

Health boards 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.

#### ***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***

*Part III, Article 5(1) Assessment of foster carers*

#### **Standard 19: Management and monitoring of foster care agency**

Health boards have effective structures in place for the management and monitoring of foster care services.

#### ***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***

*Part IV, Article 12 Maintenance of register*

*Part IV, Article 17 Supervision and visiting of children*

**Standard 23: The Foster Care Committee**

Health boards have foster care committees to make recommendations regarding foster care applications and to approve long-term placements. The committees contribute to the development of health boards' policies, procedures and practice.

***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part III, Article 5(3) Assessment of foster carers*

***Child Care (Placement of Children with Relatives) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part III, Article 5(2) Assessment of relatives*

**Standard 24: Placement of children through non-statutory agencies**

Health boards placing children or young people with a foster carer through anon-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.

***Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995***  
*Part VI, Article 24: Arrangements with voluntary bodies and other persons*

**Theme 5: Use of Resources****Standard 21: Recruitment and retention of an appropriate range of foster carers**

Health boards 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.

**Theme 6: Workforce****Standard 20: Training and Qualifications**

Health boards ensure that the staff employed to work with children and young people, their families and foster carers are professionally qualified and suitably trained.