



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Report of a Children's Residential Centre

Name of provider:	The Child and Family Agency
Tusla Region:	Dublin North East Region
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	22 - 23 November 2021
Centre ID:	OSV-0004172
Fieldwork ID	MON-0034548

About the centre

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

The centre was a community based children's residential centre managed by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). It was a large detached house in a Dublin suburb with access to amenities and public transport. The centre provided care for up to four children aged between 12 and 17 years who required medium to long term residential care placements. The centre provided care to children under the age of 12 years only in exceptional circumstances.

The aim of the centre was to provide a safe and supportive environment to children, to their build self-esteem and social responsibility and to provide children with a sense of belonging and participation.

The delivery of care to children was guided by Child and Family Agency policies and procedures for children's residential care. There was a model of care and an outcomes framework used in the centre which supported staff to promote children's wellbeing, support and encourage their achievements and to improve overall outcomes for children. The centre staff received guidance from a consultant psychotherapist to promote a therapeutic approach to their work with children individually and as a group, in line with the vision and ethos of the centre.

The staff in the centre worked closely with social workers to ensure that children had access to a range of services and supports outside of the centre to meet their needs.

The following information outlines some additional data of this centre.

Number of children on the date of inspection:	3
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How we inspect

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

As part of our inspection, where possible, we:

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

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

1. Capacity and capability of the service:

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

2. Quality and safety of the service:

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

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

This inspection was carried out during the following times:

Date	Times of inspection	Inspector	Role
22 November 2021	10:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Jane Mc Carroll	Inspector
23 November 2021	09:00hrs to 15:00hrs	Jane Mc Carroll	Inspector

What children told us and what inspectors observed

Children received good quality care in the centre. Children were supported to maintain their sense of identity, and contact with their family and friends was prioritised. Children received care and support based on their individual needs and placement planning was effective and good quality.

There were three children living in the centre at the time of this inspection. One child spoke to the inspector during the onsite visit and a second child spoke to the inspector over the phone. The inspector also spoke with staff and managers in the centre as well as two parents and guardians of children living there.

The children said they felt safe and secure in this centre. One child said "I feel safe living here and staff talk to me about keeping safe." Both children told the inspector that they could speak to staff if they needed help or if they did not feel safe. They talked about their keyworkers in the centre who were assigned to work with them individually. Children's keyworkers provided support to them in their placement and children said that they had helped them a lot. Parents and guardians were also satisfied that their children living there were safe and supported.

The centre was homely and welcoming and there had been improvements in the maintenance and décor of the premises since the inspectors last visit there in 2019. This had a positive impact on the children. They liked their home and they said that they were happy to have family or friends over to visit. Children chose certain soft furnishings for the house during the refurbishment work and there was thoughtful consideration by the staff team on how best to create a homely and welcoming environment, where children felt comfortable and relaxed. The inspector heard positive comments from staff, parents and guardians about the quality of the living environment in the centre. Staff described how this in itself has been a mechanism to bring staff and children together around the shared goals of day-to-day living in the centre.

Children were happy about daily life in the centre. One child said that they liked that "it was quiet there" and that they had opportunities to go out and visit family and friends that were close by. Another child said that that they were made to feel welcome there and that "everything was going well." The inspector observed respectful and relaxed conversations and interactions amongst children and staff. Staff and managers were visible and active in the routines of children in the centre. Children said and the inspector observed, that staff spent time with them individually and together as a group. This helped children develop meaningful relationships with adults in the centre and with each other.

There was a relaxed atmosphere in the centre. There was ample space inside and outside the premises which provided a variety of places where children could spend time. Children talked about the different areas which they enjoyed the most in the house such as "the sitting room" which they thought was "lovely." Children had their own bedrooms and they liked that they had the opportunity to personalise these rooms to their own taste. Children preferred to keep their own personal photographs and other memorabilia in their rooms rather than on display in communal areas on the centre. Instead, children chose pictures and plants that they would like to go on display around the house and chose where they should be placed.

Admissions to the centre were well planned and children's experiences of arriving at the centre were good. One child said that they were supported to settle into the centre. They said that staff were welcoming and this put them at ease. Parents and guardians also said that the experience of children moving in was positive for them, and staff and managers had managed this well. The team were responsive to the individual needs of children and supported them well during their transition to the centre.

Staff promoted and encouraged children's access and contact with their families, communities and professionals involved in their care. Children who spoke to the inspector were happy about the contact they had with their families and friends. They talked about having regular contact with their friends and families and that staff supported them to do this. There was effective communication between social workers and the staff in order to ensure that visits and access were appropriate and in line with individual care plans. Where contact was part of the plan, staff supported children to engage or re-engage with their families. Parents and guardians had mixed views on the quality of this support. One felt that there was good levels of consistent support, communication and planning around visits, and another said that this could improve.

Children spoke positively to the inspector about the support they received from staff in relation to becoming more independent and self-reliant. This included for example, support they received around compiling a CV, grocery shopping, opening a bank account and being able to manage their health needs independently.

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

Capacity and capability

The management structure in the centre was clearly defined and stable. There was a centre manager who was experienced and skilled in her role. She was supported by a deputy manager who was also experienced and skilled and had achieved a permanent employment contract since the last HIQA inspection in 2019. The centre managers were active and visible in the centre. There was a strong ethos for team working. Managers supported this ethos through providing effective communication systems, being clear in relation to the delegation of duties and driving a culture for learning, development and quality improvement. Staff spoke positively about the support they received from their managers.

This centre was last inspected in November 2019, when inspectors found mixed levels of compliance with 12 of the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres. At that time, the centre was judged compliant or substantially compliant with five out of 12 standards, such as standards relating to child protection, the co-ordination and integration of care provided to children and the management of incidents in the centre. At that time, seven standards were non-compliant and these related to the governance and management of the centre, positive behavioural support and individualised care and support to children.

This centre had experienced a difficult and turbulent time in the last two and a half years due to difficulties in managing and sustaining the placement of one child, who had since left the service. This placement could not be sustained given the level of disruption and the impact this had on other children and the daily operations of the centre. Since this placement ended, the centre managers and staff have been eager to address the residual impact of this placement, and the learning it had brought. Some staff said that formal support offered to them had been delayed. A review of this placement was being conducted by regional managers for learning and potential improvements at regional level.

There were appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that there were sufficient numbers of competent and experienced staff working in the centre. The consistency and stability of staffing in the centre was very good, and levels of staff turnover were low. This level of stability had helped to develop consistency in systems and practices which in turn, had improved the level of compliance with standards found on this inspection. Staff were invested in the service being provided to children and they shared manager's commitment to providing a high quality service in line with the ethos of the centre and their approach to care.

There were additional staff recruited to the service since the last inspection and the use of agency workers had reduced. When agency staff were needed, there were a small

number of agency workers to choose from, who worked regularly in the centre for a number of years and who were already known to children. There were two vacant posts in the centre and the centre manager expected that the recruitment of staff to fill these vacancies was imminent. Staffing levels on shifts at the time of this inspection were appropriate and children, parents and guardians said that staff were always available to children in the centre.

The centre had a statement of purpose which was reviewed by the centre manager and deputy regional director. The vision and ethos of the centre were clearly outlined as well as the strong influence of particular philosophy and theory which guided the approach to care used in the centre. The vision and ethos was very much embedded in practice. Staff understood and implemented practices consistently. There were some gaps in the statement or purpose regarding the centre's management and staffing arrangements. The centre manager was awaiting guidance from Tusla to address these. Children had their own version of the statement of purpose for the centre which was child friendly and accessible to them.

Standard 5.3

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

The centre had a written statement of purpose and function which set out details of the service being provided and the age range of children that the service catered for. The aims, vision and ethos of the centre were also reflected well but the statement of purpose was not fully compliant with the National Standards. The centre manager was awaiting guidance from the provider to address these.

Judgment: Substantially compliant

Standard 6.1

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

Regulation 6: Staffing

There were sufficient numbers of staff employed in the residential centre to care for the number and needs of the children placed there. Workforce planning was effective.

Judgment: Compliant

Quality and safety

Overall, children experienced care that was well planned and responsive to their needs. The commentary provided by children themselves was clear that they had good relationships with staff and were happy living there. Children experienced consistent care from the staff team and this promoted their wellbeing and safety.

The vision and ethos of the centre was strongly influenced by a particular philosophy of how to care for and support children. The service focused strongly on attachment theory and therapeutic communication as an underpinning approach to guide practice and to steer staff in their relationships with the children. This approach also guided staff to support children to develop positive relationships with each other, and where possible with their families or other important people in their lives. The inspector found many examples of good practice by staff in this regard. Staff facilitated and planned visits and access between children and their families. They communicated and consulted with parents and family around children's care, and were sensitive in the ways they supported children to maintain important relationships and family links.

Community meetings were utilised by the centre to provide a collaborative space for children and staff to deal with issues around group living, and to let children have a say in decisions that affected them. This was a good mechanism for children to express their views and to develop and enhance their own skills for problem solving, communication, responsibility and mutual respect. Children made decisions about grocery shopping, about activities that they would like to organise, and they discussed changes in the centre such as new COVID-19 restrictions.

Children experienced care and support that promoted positive behaviour. The centre did not routinely use sanctions as a way to address negative behaviour. Instead, and in line with ethos of the centre, staff used restorative and relationship based approaches to help children understand the consequences of behaviour and to help them make positive changes in their lives. Children's records showed that there was good consistent emotional support provided to children during times of difficulty. Staff were skilled in understanding the potential causes of children's behaviours and they worked sensitively and appropriately with children to address these. Children's achievements and positive behaviour was acknowledged in the centre and children were rewarded for their achievements. For example, one child received a gift for doing well at school.

Physical interventions and restrictive practices were not routinely used in the centre. The management and oversight of the use of physical restraint was strong. Staff were aware of the policy and procedure for its correct and appropriate use. Records showed that its use was limited to situations where there was a risk to the safety of children or others.

The managerial oversight of restrictive practices used in the centre was generally good. The centre had a register to monitor the use of restrictive practices but the use of room searches as a restrictive practice was not included in the register. While these incidents were individually recorded on children's files and subject to individual managerial approval, they were not reviewed overarchingly through the register, in order to monitor the level and frequency of this practice across the centre and identify trends and potential risks. Risk assessments were completed regularly to determine the appropriate use of any restrictive practice as a risk control measure in the centre. Furthermore, the inspector found improvements since the last inspection in 2019 in the continuous review and assessment of some restrictive practices, and this ensured that these practices were effective, and a necessary response to risk, rather than routine practice. Staff were guided in this area of care provision through training, centre policies and procedures and line management.

The staff were equipped with mechanisms, procedures and tools to plan and provide good quality safe care to children and placement planning was effective. Placement plans and placement support plans were developed for children in the centre in line their statutory care plans. Placement plans were found to be comprehensive and updated accordingly to reflect children's unique circumstances. Children's views and wishes were

considered throughout the care planning process. Not all children had up-to-date care plans, and one placement plan was outstanding. However, this was identified by the manager and a child in care review was scheduled for the week of this inspection to address this gap. Individual keyworking sessions were completed with children by staff to cover a range of needs identified in the care planning process, such as health promotion, self-regulation and relationships.

Since the last inspection in 2019, the centre had developed a good system to track and monitor all interventions with children on a monthly basis, which provided assurances to managers on the quality and safety of care provided to children. Shift planning was effective and the staff team also had good communication systems to make sure the children's needs were met on a day-to-day basis. There were some gaps in the records provided to the centre by social workers allocated to children living there, such as vaccinations records and care orders. These were escalated prior to the inspection and rectified during the inspection fieldwork.

The staff team were skilled in understanding the specific needs of each child and this meant that children experienced good individualised and personalised care. For example, staff had devised a communication tip sheet which prompted staff on the most effective way to communicate with a child. There were also occasions when some staff sought out wider training opportunities or information about good practices in responding to particular needs of children living there.

There were appropriate safeguarding measures in the centre and children were safe. There were routines in place in the centre and staff supervised children closely. Children were continuously learning about keeping safe. Staff received training in Children First. The centre manager was the designated liaison person for the centre and staff members who met with inspectors were aware of this role. Allegations or concerns about children were managed appropriately and notified to relevant agencies and professionals in a timely manner.

Staff were proactive their management and monitoring of children's safety. Absence management plans were detailed and tailored to the needs and circumstances of children. There were records of strategy meetings with key professionals to address the needs and risks of children as they arose, and these meetings resulted in clear and specific actions to guide staff in their delivery of care to children to keep them safe. Safety planning was detailed and effective and included the voice and views of children. There was one safety plan identified by the inspector which required review by staff and social workers to ensure it was being adhered to, and that it was effective in keeping a child safe. Records in the centre did not show appropriate monitoring of all components of the plan. The centre manager arranged for this to happen at the time of inspection.

The centre was homely, safe and well maintained. The environment was enjoyed by staff and children. The layout and design contributed to good quality, safe and effective care, having regard to the number of children in the centre. Recent refurbishment work had improved the quality of the premises significantly. There was appropriate space for rest, recreation and privacy, as well as group activities.

Standard 1.5

Each child develops and maintains positive attachments and links with family, the community, and other significant people in their lives.

Regulation 8: Access arrangements

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

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 2.2

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

Regulation 23: Care Plan

Regulation 24: Supervision and visiting of children

Regulation 25: Review of cases

Regulation 26: Special review

Placement planning was effective and children received individualised care. The staff were skilled and equipped with mechanisms, procedures and tools to provide consistent safe care to children. There was good oversight and monitoring of interventions with children to assure staff and managers of the care provided.

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

Fire safety arrangements were well managed. The centre maintained a risk register which was updated to reflect current risks in the centre. The centre was homely and welcoming and there had been improvements in the maintenance and décor of the premises since the last inspection in 2019. The environment was enjoyed by staff and children. The layout and design contributed to good quality, safe and effective care, having regard to the number of children in the centre.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 2.6

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

Children were helped and supported to prepare for adulthood and to develop their independence where appropriate.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 3.1

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

Children were protected from abuse. There were good safeguarding practices in place in the centre.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 3.2

Each child experiences care and support that promotes positive behaviour.

Staff had appropriate skills, knowledge and training to manage behaviours that challenged. The management of oversight of restrictive practices and physical interventions used in the centre was generally good. Staff knew the children well and understood the potential causes of children's behaviours. They worked sensitively and appropriately with children to address these in an individualised way.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 4.2

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

Regulation 9: Health care

Regulation 20: Medical examination

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

Judgment: Compliant

Appendix 1 - Full list of standards considered under each dimension

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