



Report of a Children's Residential Centre

Name of provider:	The Child and Family Agency
Tusla Region:	Dublin Mid Leinster
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	24 and 25 February 2021
Centre ID:	OSV 0004165
Fieldwork ID	MON-0031979

About the centre

The following information was provided by the centre about their service.

This service was a community based residential centre located in the Midlands and it was managed by the Child and Family Agency (Tusla). The centre cared for four children between the age of 12 and 17 years and provided medium- to long-term placements.

The aim of the service was to provide a safe caring environment characterized by good quality relationships with children and children living in the centre, in which the issues preventing them from living at home would be addressed with a view to facilitating their earliest possible return. Where this was not possible, children were prepared for a successful transition to an agreed placement of choice.

The following information outlines some additional data of this centre.

Number of children on the date of inspection:	4
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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
24 February 2021	9:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Olivia O'Connell	Lead Inspector
25 February 2021	9:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Olivia O'Connell	Lead Inspector
24 February 2021	9:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Tom Flanagan	Support Inspector
25 February 2021	9:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Tom Flanagan	Support Inspector

Views of children who use the service

From what children, their families and social workers told us, children felt well supported, cared for and listened to in the centre. Children's rights were actively promoted, and children fully engaged with the staff team in relation to their individual needs and what mattered most to them. They were involved in the development of plans to address risk and to achieve good outcomes.

Children had a good quality of life in the centre, and although there were challenges due to public health restrictions, the staff team kept children busy and engaged in activities and their education.

Four children were living in the centre at the time of the inspection. Although they were somewhat limited in their outside pursuits, including meeting with family and friends, all were attending school remotely, and this was being actively supported by staff. Activities being provided in the centre included cooking classes via Zoom and artwork. Staff were very complimentary of the children in the centre and how resilient they were in the context of the pandemic and associated restrictions.

Children had appropriate access to all areas of the centre and could leave the premises to visit family and attend necessary appointments, once risk assessed. External professionals such as social workers, could also visit the centre once a risk and necessity assessment had been completed, and it was important that these connections were being maintained

In relation to life in the centre, inspectors were told by the children who talked with them, that staff in the centre were "amazing", "they are my family." Inspectors also heard that "they've [staff] always done everything that's right for me, not right for them. That's what I love about them." When asked what they would like to change, children said that they would like more freedom to visit friends, and that current restrictions were difficult for them. Their family members who talked with inspectors also described how they missed seeing the children more, but understood why.

Social workers told inspectors that the programme of care in the centre met the individual needs of the children they were allocated to, and that the staff team provided a nurturing and caring environment for the children to develop and flourish. They were of the view that the centre provided a good quality service to the children living there. The centre communicated well with social workers and provided regular updates on the progress of the children, and children benefited from this level of communication, when decisions were being made about their lives. Social workers were satisfied that the staff team actively promoted children's rights, advocated on each child's behalf when needed, and contributed to children's care plans and reviews.

Inspectors spoke with family members of some of the children. They said that they were supported to be involved in planning their child's care, and described good ongoing

communication with staff members. Family members had no concerns or worries about the care the children received. Inspectors also spoke with an independent advocate for children, who described the care they received as good. A potential area of improvement highlighted by them was in relation to communication between professionals on care assessment meetings, and in particular, when visits to the centre were limited.

In summary, children felt safe and well supported by the centre's caring and responsive team. Everyone the inspector spoke to complimented the quality and levels of support given to the children placed there. There was a general consensus that children had benefited from a strong child-centred culture, within a clear structured and caring approach, delivered by an experienced and committed staff team. This was reflected in the findings of this inspection in relation to how the centre was managed, and the quality and safety of the service.

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

Capacity and capability

There were effective management systems in place in this centre, which ensured good quality care was being delivered to the children. The management team were proactive and responsive to issues as they arose, and improvements were made where required. There was a clearly defined management structure in place, and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

The centre was last inspected by HIQA in December 2019, and managers had brought about the required changes in practice identified in the inspection report.

Effective governance arrangements were in place to ensure that the operation of the centre was subject to regular review and that both staff and managers were accountable for their practice. Roles and responsibilities of managers and staff were clearly defined, and good working relationships were evident. From a review of documentation and interviews with staff, it was clear that the staff and management team strived towards the best possible outcomes for children. The staff team had a shared understanding of what constituted good and safe practice.

The centre and deputy managers were suitably qualified, experienced and competent. The centre manager reported to, and was supervised by, a deputy regional manager who maintained good oversight of the centre. The deputy regional manager reported to the regional manager of the national children's residential services in the Dublin-Mid-Leinster region. Inspectors found that there was an effective system in place to ensure both

managers and staff received regular supervision and support. The frequency of supervision in the centre had improved since the previous inspection and was now in line with national policy.

At the time of inspection, the centre had sufficient staff in place to ensure children's needs were met on a consistent basis. The staff team was very well established, experienced and skilled in their direct work with children. The centre was operating at full complement and there were no staff vacancies. All staff had been in post from between three and twenty years, and were qualified. This established team provided a consistent and stable environment for the children. External professionals who spoke with inspectors spoke highly of the staff team. They were of the view that the staff team was child-focused and ensured interagency involvement and communication at all levels.

There was a statement of purpose and function in place for the centre which was regularly reviewed and updated as required. The most recent version was dated February 2021, and there had been minimal changes from previous versions. The statement of purpose was comprehensive and accurately described the organisational structure, policies informing practice, services provided in the centre and the model of care delivered in the centre. The age range that the centre had the capacity to provide a service to was accurately reflected. A child-friendly version of the statement of purpose was included in the children's booklet, which was given to each child on admission. A version for parents was also available.

Previous HIQA inspections had found that many of the national policies and procedures that underpinned the operation of the centre had not been updated for several years. Significant progress had been made in this regard. A full suite of up-to-date national policies for children's residential centres was being rolled out, along with an implementation plan which included a programme of training. This was on target at the time of inspection.

There were good systems of communication within the centre and records of regular team meetings and management meetings reflected this. Staff members told inspectors that these meetings were particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. The meetings ensured that the staff team remained connected. Records of these meetings showed that key areas of care provision as well as assurances in relation to resources, record keeping, interagency working, the risk register and overall outcomes for children were discussed. The deputy regional manager also held regular meetings with centre managers, which contributed to good governance and oversight of the service. Inspectors found that similar standing agenda items were included in these meetings, and quality assurance audits and HIQA inspections were also discussed.

The centre manager and deputy centre manager were available to staff to provide on-call support should they require it outside of normal working hours. The current on-call arrangements were implemented in March 2020. This was an interim measure whilst

national discussions were ongoing regarding the roll-out of an agreed national on-call system. The interim on-call arrangements were effective at meeting service requirements.

Managers and staff had developed good working relationships with children's families and external professionals involved in the children's care. Family members, social workers and other professionals told inspectors that managers and staff were accessible and that they were kept informed of the progress that children were making and advised of any challenges that arose. A system was also in place for significant events (SENs) to be recorded, investigated, and reported to all relevant persons involved with individual children. SENs were reviewed and analysed at regional level for trending and learning. The regional deputy manager told inspectors that trending SENs was a particular target for 2021, in order to improve their effectiveness.

Managers of the service provided strong leadership. This kept children at the centre of practice decisions, and ensured the centre's model of care was implemented. The deputy regional manager regularly audited records to ensure full implementation of the model. Inspectors found that managers provided good support and direction to the staff team and that this contributed to good quality practice and good morale across the staff team. Managers described to inspectors initiatives in place and their overall vision for the service, which was that children's participation in matters which affected them would be strengthened. One example of children's participation in practice was their inclusion in designing and creating a sensory garden for the centre.

Managers were found to be knowledgeable about each child's care and placement plan, and they ensured all records related to children were up-to-date and signed. A programme of auditing was in place to track progress and assess the impact of any improvements made. Some examples included audits of supervision, children's records and health and safety audits. Managers intended to drive improvement in reflective practice in 2021.

Risk was well managed in the centre. A risk register system was in place which was reviewed and updated regularly. Risk registers were overseen by the deputy regional manager and regional manager, to review progress and to ensure control measures were appropriate. There were clear procedures in place to escalate risk if necessary. Individual and collective risk assessments were in place for each child. Inspectors found that increased risk was responded to promptly. There was a specific set of risk assessments and procedures in place for COVID-19 and infection control measures were adhered to in the centre. Managers ensured that the staff team had access to the most up-to-date guidance and associated training.

Centre managers spoke confidently about the commitment, experience and professional knowledge of their staff, and this was also a finding of this inspection. All staff had received mandatory training in areas such as Children First, fire safety and medication management. A training log was maintained in the centre which inspectors reviewed. It

showed that additional training was provided to staff on areas such as cultural diversity and attachment and adolescent mental health. A training needs analysis (TNA) had been completed in January 2021 and had identified areas for further professional development. Staff told inspectors that they felt well equipped to fulfil the responsibilities of their job. They felt that their training needs were being met.

Inspectors reviewed information provided by the centre manager prior to inspection, and reviewed a sample of staff files held centrally in Tusla in relation to its workforce. Inspectors found that safe recruitment practices were in place, staff records reviewed were up-to-date, and staff files held the relevant information.

The next section of the report provides the inspection findings on how the governance and management arrangements in place in the centre impacted and influenced the quality and safety of the service.

Standard 5.1

The registered provider ensures that the residential centre performs its functions as outlined in relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect and promote the welfare of each child.

Regulation 5: Care practices and operational policies

The centre was operated in compliance with relevant regulatory requirements and national standards. Staff were aware of their obligations under Children First and had all received mandatory training. A full suite of up-to-date national policies for children's residential centres was in place alongside a plan for implementation.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 5.2

The registered provider ensures that the residential centre has effective leadership, governance and management arrangements in place with clear lines of accountability to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.

Management systems in the centre ensured effective oversight, monitoring and review of all aspects of care provision. There was good leadership and adequate systems in place to monitor the operation of the service and to review the quality and safety of the care provided. Risks were well managed in the centre. The frequency of supervision and team meetings ensured that these were timely and in line with Tusla policy.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 5.3

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

The statement of purpose and function clearly described the model of service delivered in the centre. It also described the organisational structure and the management and staff employed in the service.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 5.4

The registered provider ensures that the residential centre strives to continually improve the safety and quality of the care and support provided to achieve better outcomes for children.

Managers at all levels provided strong leadership. They ensured that the needs of the children were being met. There was good oversight of practice through a system of audit, both internal and external to the service, which was tracked and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 6.1

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

Regulation 6: Staffing

The centre had a consistent and stable team. All staff were suitably qualified and or skilled. They demonstrated competency in their everyday practice, which positively impacted on outcomes for children and their experience of their care.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 6.2

The registered provider recruits people with the required competencies to manage and deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.

There were safe recruitment practices in place and staff files were up-to-date and held required information.

Judgment: Compliant

Quality and safety

Overall, children were supported and encouraged to have a good quality of life where their wishes and choices were considered. Inspectors found that the children living in the centre received care and support which respected their diversity and promoted their rights. This person-centred care and support enhanced their wellbeing.

Children's rights were clearly laid out in a booklet which was given to every child on admission to the centre. Staff made sure that children had access to the complaints process and were supported in using it when required. Inspectors found that the children living in the centre were confident in the complaints system and used it. It was evident to inspectors that staff and managers supported children's right to have their voices heard. As one manager stated, children should feel like "an equal participant in their care". Staff and managers said that there was always room for improvement around the "co-creation of things" and how to proactively empower children. This was evident throughout the inspection.

Direct work with children provided staff members with the opportunity to inform children of their rights around decision-making and accessing information about them, and staff used these sessions effectively in this regard. Managers were very familiar with each child's care and placement plan, and ensured children were involved in their development. The model of care in the centre also encouraged a rights-based approach to practice, and children were consulted with regularly during children's meetings.

There was strong sense of promoting, respecting and preserving each child's cultural heritage. For example, particular dietary needs were being met and some children were taking cooking classes online so they could prepare specific foods. Cultural diversity training had also recently been provided to the staff team.

Inspectors found that information was shared in an effective and child-centred way. Each child was provided with information about the centre upon their admission and this was further discussed through ongoing direct work. Children were encouraged to review their files and staff were keen to be open and transparent with children whenever possible.

Children were provided with information on external supports and services, dependant on their needs and interests. By way of an example, one child was supported in their application for an outdoor training leadership course. Children were also informed about and supported to contact independent advocacy agencies and organisations.

Direct work with children was often the forum where children could discuss information about themselves, including why they were in care. Care practice aimed to help children

achieve their ambitions, recognise and build on their strengths and promote their rights; while at the same time keeping them safe.

In summary, children were well cared for by a competent staff team. The centre managers ensured children's rights were promoted and that each child was treated as an individual in their own right, whilst also promoting group living. Planning for children was good and they were encouraged to participate in decisions about their lives.

Standard 1.1

Each child experiences care and support which respects their diversity and protects their rights in line with the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Regulation 10: Religion

Regulation 4: Welfare of child

Children living in the centre received care and support which respected their diversity and promoted their rights. This child-centred care and support enhanced their quality of life.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 1.4

Each child has access to information, provided in an accessible format that takes account of their communication needs.

Information was shared in an effective and child-centred manner. Children had access to information relevant to their care, needs and interests.

Judgment: Compliant

Appendix 1 - Full list of standards considered under each dimension

Standard Title	Judgment
Capacity and capability	
<p>Standard 5.1 The registered provider ensures that the residential centre performs its functions as outlined in relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect and promote the welfare of each child.</p>	Compliant
<p>Standard 5.2 The registered provider ensures that the residential centre has effective leadership, governance and management arrangements in place with clear lines of accountability to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.</p>	Compliant
<p>Standard 5.3 The residential centre has a publicly available statement of purpose that accurately and clearly describes the services provided.</p>	Compliant
<p>Standard 5.4 The registered provider ensures that the residential centre strives to continually improve the safety and quality of the care and support provided to achieve better outcomes for children.</p>	Compliant
<p>Standard 6.1 The registered provider plans, organises and manages the workforce to deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.</p>	Compliant
<p>Standard 6.2 The registered provider recruits people with the required competencies to manage and deliver child-centred, safe and effective care and support.</p>	Compliant
Quality and safety	
<p>Standard 1.1 Each child experiences care and support which respects their diversity and protects their rights in line with the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>	Compliant
<p>Standard 1.4 Each child has access to information, provided in an accessible format that takes account of their communication needs</p>	Compliant