



**Health
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Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Regulation and Monitoring
of Social Care Services

Guidance on safeguarding for statutory children's residential centres

February 2025

Safer Better Care

Contents

Introduction by the Chief Inspector of Social Services	2
Purpose	4
Supporting documentation	4
Legislation	4
National guidance	4
Regulations	4
HIOA national standards:	4
HIOA guidance documents for providers:	5
How this document is structured	5
Guidance to support inspection fieldwork	7
Guidance on standards and regulations related to capacity and capability	8
Guidance on standards and regulations related to quality and safety	22
Appendix 1 — Bibliography and resources	55
Appendix 2 — Revision history	56

Introduction by the Chief Inspector of Social Services

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) through the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services is responsible for carrying out its functions as required by the Health Act 2007 (as amended). This safeguarding guidance document has been published by the Chief Inspector to support these functions.

Safeguarding is one of the most important responsibilities of a provider within a children's residential centre. Safeguarding has a dual function, to protect children from harm and promote their welfare.

The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) defines child safeguarding as:

Ensuring safe practice and appropriate responses by workers and volunteers to concerns about the safety or welfare of children, including online concerns, should these arise. Child safeguarding is about protecting the child from harm, promoting their welfare and in doing so creating an environment which enables children and young people to grow, develop and achieve their full potential.

All children have the right to be safe and to live a life free from harm and exploitation. Every child living in a children's residential centre places their trust in the provider, centre manager and staff to support them to feel and be safe. Safeguarding, therefore, relies on people and services working together to ensure that children are treated with dignity and respect and that they are empowered to make decisions about their own lives.

Safeguarding is more than just the prevention of abuse, exploitation and neglect. It is about being proactive, recognising safeguarding concerns, and having measures in place to protect children from harm and exploitation. Safeguarding is about promoting children's human rights, empowering them to exercise appropriate choice and control over their lives, and giving them the tools to protect themselves from harm and or exploitation and to keep themselves safe in their relationships and in their environment.

Safeguarding is about creating a culture of openness where safeguarding concerns are discussed, reported and investigated. Providers must ensure appropriate procedures are in place in line with legislation and national guidance to identify, report where appropriate and respond to safeguarding concerns. Effective safeguarding procedures are underpinned by access to training for staff to support better understanding and awareness of safeguarding and abuse. Providers have a responsibility to ensure there is an awareness among staff about what constitutes safeguarding concerns and know what to do if children are at risk of further harm and or exploitation. All staff have a duty to be aware of their professional

responsibilities as mandated reporters. Mandatory reporters are people who have a legal duty under the Children First Act 2015 to report child protection and welfare concerns to the Tusla and where necessary to An Garda Síochána.

Poor safeguarding practices could result in children being at increased risk of bullying, exploitation, harm and abuse which could have a detrimental impact on their safety, quality of life and overall outcomes.

It is essential that providers take a holistic and child-centred approach to safeguarding which ensures that everyone recognises their individual and collective responsibilities to ensure that children who are vulnerable and at risk are supported to live free from harm and exploitation.

Good safeguarding practice requires a partnership approach with children, family members, their social worker, residential staff, members of An Garda Síochána where required and other specialist services that may be working with the child. As children grow and develop, they are influenced by many factors — different environments, and people outside of the residential centre. Children can encounter risks in these environments. Those working with children need to understand the nature of these risks and engage with them so as to create safety around them.

As Chief Inspector, I am committed to ensuring a human rights-based approach to care and support and the promotion of effective safeguarding. This safeguarding regulatory programme builds on the current regulatory framework by putting a focused lens on safeguarding in children's residential centres.

Finbarr Colfer

Chief Inspector of Social Services

Purpose

The purpose of this safeguarding guidance is to complement the overarching guidance for the assessment of children's residential centres. This document will offer additional supporting information on assessing compliance and will offer guidance on reviewing the key standards and regulations applicable to the safeguarding of children in children residential centres.

The guidance includes a section on what a service striving for improvement in safeguarding looks like. The intention is that where providers meet the requirements of the regulations and standards, they should be seeking to constantly strive for ongoing improvements in the quality of the service. This part of the guidance also outlines examples of what children can expect of a service that is striving for quality improvement. We will acknowledge and report on improvements and quality initiatives in relation to safeguarding.

Supporting documentation

This guidance document should be applied in conjunction with the following for children in statutory residential centres.

Legislation

- Health Act 2007 (as amended)
- Child Care Act, 1991
- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015
- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011 (as amended)
- Child and Family Agency Act, 2013
- Children Act, 2001
- National Vetting Bureau Act 2012 to 2016
- Children First Act, 2015
- Protected Disclosures Act 2014

National guidance

- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017)

Regulations

- Child Care (Placement of Children in Residential Care) Regulations, 1995

HIQA national standards:

- *National Standards for Children's Residential Centres* (2018).

HIQA guidance documents for providers:

- *Safeguarding assessment-judgment framework for statutory children's residential centres (2025)*
- *Guidance for the assessment of statutory children's residential centres: January 2019.*

How this document is structured

The guidance document is set out in two overarching sections which are termed 'dimensions'. These are:

1. Capacity and capability.
2. Quality and safety.

The dimension of **capacity and capability** concentrates on the overall delivery of the service and how the provider determines whether an effective and safe service is being provided. It focuses on the governance, leadership and management arrangements in place in the residential centre in respect of safeguarding. It covers how effective these are at ensuring that children are kept safe from harm. It outlines how people who work in the residential centre are supported through education and training, and whether there are appropriate systems in place to underpin the safe delivery and oversight of the service.

As this is an inspection programme focused on safeguarding, the following standards will be assessed under **capacity and capability**:

No.	Standard
3.3	Incidents are effectively identified, managed and reviewed in a timely manner and outcomes inform future practice.
5.1	The registered provider ensures that the residential centre performs its function as outlined in relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect and promote the welfare of each child.
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.

The dimension of **quality and safety** evaluates whether this is a good quality and caring service which ensures children are safe. It includes information about the care and supports available for children and the environment in which they live.

As this is an inspection programme focused on safeguarding, the following standards

will be assessed under **quality and safety**:

No.	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.
1.3	Each child exercises choice, has access to an advocacy service and is enabled to participate in making informed decisions about their care.
2.2	Each child receives care and support based on their individual needs in order to maximise their wellbeing and personal development.
2.3	The residential centre is child centred and homely, and the environment promotes the safety and wellbeing of each child. <i>Note: This standard will not be routinely examined as part of this inspection programme but will be an option for inclusion by inspectors, if required.</i>
2.5	Each child experiences integrated care which is coordinated effectively within and between services.
3.1	Each child is safeguarded from abuse and neglect and their care and welfare is protected and promoted.

Both of the above dimensions are interdependent: good governance and oversight procedures, the right resources, active use of information and a competent and confident workforce (**capacity and capability**) are essential to the delivery of a sustainable quality and safe service (**quality and safety**). Essentially, child-centred care and support, safeguarding and protection, and better health, wellbeing and development for children living in the residential centre, all happen because the capacity and capability arrangements are there to make sure they happen.

Guidance to support inspection fieldwork

This is a targeted approach to inspection which will focus on safeguarding within children's residential centres. The primary aim of targeted inspection approach is to assess provider's compliance with safeguarding children living in residential care setting, but also aims to promote quality improvement. Inspectors will examine the holistic approach by the provider to assess if children feel safe and are safe.

These inspections will be unannounced and will typically take place over two days. The inspector will spend two days on site, and they will seek to speak with children, staff and managers and carry out file and document reviews and observations. (Note: at times, inspections will be completed by two inspectors during the course of one day on site.) Following the on-site inspection, a third remote inspection day may be included as required, to review a sample of staff personnel files and to speak with families, guardians and external professionals, where appropriate. These interactions will be conducted over the phone or online.

The following **capacity and capability** and **quality and safety** sections should be read in conjunction with the *Safeguarding assessment-judgment framework for statutory children's residential centres (2025)*.

Guidance on standards and regulations related to capacity and capability

Standard 3.3

Incidents are effectively identified, managed and reviewed in a timely manner and outcomes inform future practice

Regulation 15: Notification of significant events

What a service striving for good safeguarding practice looks like

The timely identification, management and review of incidents are an important element of safeguarding children living in residential care. The assessment for any root cause of the incident and identification and implementation of any learning and actions which may mitigate future occurrences will strengthen safeguarding practice. The provider and centre manager have developed and supported a culture of openness, transparency and accountability, where reflective practice is encouraged and sharing learning is commonplace.

Incidents which impact a child's safety are effectively identified, reported, recorded and managed. The centre manager has ensured that incidents are notified to the child's social worker and other relevant parties in the required format within the specified time frame and that all necessary information is submitted. Through the review of incidents, children's vulnerabilities are recognised and effective measures are in place to promote their safety.

Incidents are appropriately managed and reviewed for trends as well as indicators of risks to facilitate reflective practice, enable effective learning and to reduce reoccurrence of risk. There is ongoing oversight, including external oversight, of safeguarding practices incorporating regular audits and review of the effectiveness of the measures in place to reduce the identified safeguarding risks.

For example, when children are reported missing from care, these incidents are reviewed both individually and collectively to ensure adherence to individual absence management plans as well as the joint-working protocol for An Garda Síochána and Tusla for dealing with these incidents. In addition, reviews of such incidents should consider any trends in behaviour or circumstances for children which may indicate safeguarding risks and the effectiveness of management and intervention plans to address these. Learning from incidents is communicated promptly to all relevant adults, including staff and external professionals, to ensure the safety of the child.

Staff are actively involved in the quality assurance programme and take responsibility for areas such as the placement plan updates in response to learning from notifications. Staff have access to evidence-based research to support them in quality improvement initiatives and interventions to mitigate further episodes.

What this means for the child

If an accident or incident happens in the centre, a child can discuss this with staff and they are confident that they will be listened to. Staff recognise and identify safeguarding risks to children and they act quickly to keep children safe from harm. Staff will talk to children about concerns for their safety and explain changes to plans aimed at keeping them safe. If something happens that puts a child's safety at risk, every action necessary is taken to learn from this and to stop it from happening again. Children are included in reviews and their opinion sought where appropriate.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done**Through observation****Inspectors will observe:**

- when safe and appropriate to do so, incidents or events during inspection which require safeguarding measures to address risks, such as returns following missing-from-care incidents, how staff respond to the incident, adhere to the provider's policies and procedures for the centre and communicate with the child on actions required to keep them safe
- if during handovers or team meetings, there is evidence of learning and, if necessary, improvement brought about as a result of the findings of any incident, or significant event reviews
- interactions between staff and children as well as peer interaction in the residential centre.

Through communication**Inspectors will communicate with staff:**

- to establish their understanding of the provider's policies and procedures for the centre relating to safeguarding and child protection
- to determine their confidence and competence in identifying, managing and responding to safeguarding risks and or concerns.

Inspectors will communicate with children:

- to explore interventions and supports implemented to promote and enhance their understanding of situations, including relationships which may be exploitative or coercive
- to see if they have been involved in an incident and determine their views on how incidents, particularly those in which there are risks to their safety and wellbeing such as missing from care, are managed
- to determine their involvement in the development of plans for their own safety.

Inspectors will communicate with the residential centre manager:

- to determine the procedures for identification, reporting, managing and evaluation of incidents and significant events, with a focus on identifying and responding to any safeguarding concerns
- to determine how they ensure that all incidents are recorded, notifications are made and any identified learning is used to improve the quality and safety of the service.

Through a review of documents**Inspectors will review documents such as:**

- incident management policies and procedures
- relevant local and national policies and procedures for the management and review of incidents, such as incidents where a child goes missing and practice response to incidents when child is missing from care or has repeated unauthorised absences
- a sample of significant event records with a focus on timeliness of the notification, the identification of safeguarding concerns and the response by the provider
- a sample of care and placement plans to determine if they have been updated when required following incidents and significant events to include any risks related to safeguarding
- records of review of incidents and significant events to determine learning gained from the management of safeguarding incidents and management of behaviour that challenges and the application of this

learning to service improvements (including management audits)

- records of external oversight of safeguarding incidents and management of behaviour that challenges, including minutes of professionals meetings, audits and or reviews by an external manager.

Other documents

- minutes of children's meetings
- staff and management meetings
- team meeting minutes showing learning in relation to safeguarding
- training needs analysis for the residential centre
- incident registers – Child Protection Concerns/ Missing Child from Care/ Significant Event Notifications
- Significant Event Review Group Minutes including; actions and or recommendations

Compliance Indicators

Indicators of compliance include:

- all safeguarding issues are appropriately identified
- a record of all incidents occurring in the children's residential centre is appropriately maintained
- a notification is provided to the child's designated social worker and other relevant parties in a timely manner
- safeguarding risks are appropriately identified, reported, recorded and effectively managed
- there is both internal and external monitoring of the provider's approach to the management of incidents, and action on any safeguarding concerns are identified as part of the review.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- While there are appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place, there are some gaps in the associated documentation that do not result in safeguarding risks to children using the service.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- not all safeguarding incidents and significant events are identified and managed as required
- a system is in place to record safeguarding incidents and significant events but oversight and monitoring is poor
- ineffective identification, assessment and management of safety concerns for a child on review of incidents and an absence of recognition of particular vulnerabilities or indicators of safeguarding risks
- records are not sufficient to allow for effective accountability, monitoring and oversight.

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**What a service striving for quality improvement looks like**

The provider has systems in place to ensure compliance with all the child care legislation, regulations and national standards relevant to safeguarding children. New and existing legislation is reviewed on a regular basis to determine what is relevant to safeguarding, how it impacts on safeguarding practices and to address any gaps in compliance. Safeguarding policies and procedures are service-specific, clear, transparent and easily accessible. Moreover, they are 'living' documents that are used by staff and reviewed and updated as required.

There are relevant policies and procedures in place specific to the safeguarding needs of the children. Staff understand their responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015 and also apply the provider's safeguarding policies and procedures to deliver a safe and quality service. The provider promotes good safeguarding practices and has a safeguarding statement and a designated liaison person in place. They ensure that staff are aware of best practice in relation to prevention and protection of children from safeguarding issues, such as online harassment and abuse, bullying, all types of exploitation, including criminal and sexual.

Managers and staff work in partnership with their social work colleagues and members of An Garda Síochána when required to support children and ensure their safety. In circumstances where safeguarding concerns do not

meet the threshold for social work involvement, the provider ensures that there are clear procedures in place to manage, monitor and review safeguarding concerns. For example, if a child was subjected to an incident of bullying by a peer, the centre manager ensures that the issue is appropriately responded to and effectively addressed.

Providers ensure there are regular reviews of the service's adherence to safeguarding policies with identified learning applied to service improvement. There are also written policies and procedures in place which are relevant, up to date and reflective of current practice. Information governance systems are robust.

There are clear structures and systems in place for the reporting of child protection concerns, which are in line with Children First. Staff are clear about their responsibilities as mandated persons and receive regular training on the reporting of child protection concerns along with training on other safeguarding topics, such as online abuse and exploitation. The provider ensures all staff have up-to-date Children First training.

What this means for the child

Children live in a residential centre which is well managed to ensure children get the best possible care. Children are proactively safeguarded within the centre and externally, and children know that the manager and provider monitors practice to ensure safe care. Children know that staff will listen to them and support them with their worries, concerns or if they have been subjected to any form of abuse. Children are supported to understand policies relevant to their care and safety.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done

Through observation:

Inspectors will observe:

- interaction between staff and children
- if the safeguarding statement is on display
- practices in the residential centre reflect the policies and procedures
- if the practices and procedures for the centre are amended when required; for example, to reflect a new therapeutic or support intervention implemented in response to a specific presenting need or risk
- if the safeguarding policies and procedures are consistently implemented in practice and if care practices safeguard children.

Through communication**Inspectors will communicate with children:**

- to determine their understanding and experience of safeguarding within the children's residential centre.

Inspectors will communicate with staff:

- to establish what systems are in place to inform staff of any changes to safeguarding policies and procedures
- to determine if they can demonstrate sufficient knowledge of good safeguarding practices, safeguarding policies and procedures relevant to their work
- to determine if there are opportunities for staff to discuss the content of the safeguarding policies and procedures and their effectiveness with the management team.

Inspectors will communicate with the centre manager:

- to determine how they have ensured that staff understand and consistently implement policies and procedures, relevant to safeguarding and child protection
- how they promote safeguarding in the day-to-day operation of the centre.

Through a review of documents

Inspectors will review documents such as:

- local policies, procedures and guidelines to support specific safeguarding needs
- the statement of purpose
- a review of safeguarding practices within the service.

Compliance indicators**Indicators of compliance include:**

- all safeguarding policies and procedures are adopted and implemented, made available to staff and reviewed when required
- all safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed and updated at intervals not exceeding three years and, where necessary, to reflect best practice.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- while safeguarding policies and procedures are adopted and implemented,

some minor gaps are evident in the maintenance of the documentation

- safeguarding policies and procedures have been implemented into practice but some are not available in the centre or fully understood by a small number of staff
- some minor updates are required to the safeguarding policy to reflect recent changes in legislation or evidence-based practice, but there has been no adverse impact on children.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- safeguarding policies and procedures have not been prepared in writing, adopted or implemented
- safeguarding concerns which do not meet the threshold of Tusla's social work department are not followed up by the provider
- allegations of abuse have not been reported by staff and or the manager
- there is no policy on, for example, the handling and investigation of complaints from a child placed in the children's residential centre
- while there is a policy in place, for example, on the provision of behavioural support, staff are not familiar with it and, therefore, it does not consistently inform safe practice for children
- all policies and procedures have not been reviewed and updated to reflect best safeguarding practice at intervals not exceeding three years.

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.

Regulation 6: Staffing

What a service striving for quality improvement looks like

Effective governance ensures positive outcomes for children using the service through care and support that is person-centred and promotes an inclusive environment where each child is appropriately safeguarded. This involves providing a service in accordance with the stated purpose and the effective and efficient deployment of resources. Good communication is

seen as the cornerstone on which safe and effective services are provided.

The governance and management systems in place assure the delivery of safe, high-quality, child-centred care, supports learning and innovation, and promotes an open, fair and transparent culture that promotes the safeguarding of children using the service. Good leadership and management promotes an open culture where safeguarding is embedded in a provider's practices, and feedback is sought to improve service provision.

There is ongoing audit and monitoring of safeguarding practices, resulting in a thorough and effective quality assurance system in place. Learning from audits is shared with the staff team and improvements are made to the service. There is evidence that the provider, management team and centre manager strive for excellence in safeguarding through consultation, research and reflective practice. Overall, accountability for the delivery of the service is clearly defined, and there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability at individual, team and organisational level. This, along with the efficient use of resources, reduces the risk of harm and promotes the rights, health and wellbeing of children.

The provider completes an annual review of the quality and safety of care and support in the service, including safeguarding practices, to measure its performance against the national standards, and to identify any areas for ongoing improvement in the service. As part of this review, the effectiveness of the implementation of safeguarding measures is evaluated and informs the continual quality improvement cycle.

There is a strong risk assessment framework in place which identifies, manages and regularly reviews safeguarding concerns and risks. There is a continual assessment of risk in respect of a child's placement in the residential centre and the collective impact on all children placed. All staff are aware of the provider's risk management approach in the centre and remain vigilant to new or emerging safeguarding risks, and they devise individual plans in line with this. Learning from risk management is used by the provider as an opportunity to improve safeguarding in the service.

Good recruitment practices are an important element of safeguarding and ensure that staff have met all the requirements prior to working with children who have experienced harm, abuse or exploitation (for example, An Garda Síochána vetting disclosures, reference checks and professional registration). The provider has obtained all of the documentation required for safe recruitment and maintains comprehensive and accessible records for each staff member. The provider ensures staff are suitably qualified and comply with the requirements of their respective regulatory body, in line with the Health and Social Care Professionals

Act (amended), 2005, to regulate the profession of social care worker.

The provider ensures that resources are sufficient to operate a safe and effective service. Management organises and manages its workforce to ensure that the number, qualifications, experience, suitability and availability of staff members employed is appropriate and sufficient to operate a safe service. There is a system in place to respond to staff absences. Appropriate on-call arrangements should be in place. Where the centre manager delegates duties to qualified staff, this should be clearly recorded. There is adequate training and supports in place for centre managers and staff in order to support effective safeguarding practices.

The provider makes every effort to ensure that children experience continuity of care in order to enhance safeguarding in the centre. This is achieved through strategies for the retention of staff and ensuring sufficient staffing levels, and by avoiding excessive use of agency workers. Investing in long-term relationships is a protective factor for children, and supports their resilience.

What this means for the child

Children have good quality relationships with appropriately trained and suitably qualified staff. Children have opportunities to build meaningful, trusting relationships with familiar adults. They are familiar with managers and are encouraged and provided with opportunities to engage with members of the management team.

Children are cared for by a staff team who understand their safeguarding needs and are alert to potential risks of exploitation. Children are confident in their relationships with staff and assured by staff responses to safety concerns that may arise for them. Children feel confident that action will be taken to keep them safe when needed and that they will be included in discussions and decisions about their care and safety in a clear and age-appropriate way.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done

Through observation

Inspectors will observe:

- if the organisational structure outlined in the statement of purpose is reflected in practice
- children's and staff members' accessibility to management
- staff practices and interactions with children to determine if there are

enough suitably skilled staff on duty to provide safe care and support which meets the needs of the children

- the way in which staff are deployed and how the shifts are covered to meet children's needs, including whether cover arrangements are in place for staff absences, where applicable
- staff handovers to observe the level of knowledge of staff and how effectively they communicate
- if the planned and actual staff rosters correspond.

Through communication

Inspectors will communicate with children

- to determine their views and experiences of the culture within the residential centre, whether members of management are visible to them, their access to management and whether they consider there are enough resources
- to determine the response of the residential centre staff team to safeguarding concerns and risks
- to determine their experience of consistent staffing and continuity of care in the service
- to establish their view on and experience of staffing in the residential centre; for example, how staffing levels impact on their daily lives and the quality of their relationship with staff — this may also include talking to their relatives and friends, advocates and relevant professionals.

Inspectors will communicate with staff:

- to determine if they are familiar with the management structure, including their understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the reporting structure to establish if there is a culture of openness that supports staff to raise safeguarding concerns
- to explore staffing arrangements and how shifts are managed to ensure consistency, especially at weekends and night time; if staffing levels are maintained or increased at busy times; and if staff are employed to meet the different needs of children
- their understanding of the aims and objectives of the service and how they are implemented as they relate to safeguarding
- their understanding of what a quality and effective safeguarding service is
- their understanding of risk management, in particular the provider's

specific risk management approach in the centre to safeguarding concerns, and their individual roles and responsibilities there

- to establish their views on the management of safeguarding in the service.

Inspectors will speak with the centre manager:

- to ensure that arrangements in place assure them that staff recruitment is in line with relevant Irish and European legislation
- if they are knowledgeable of their responsibilities under the regulations and standards
- to establish their understanding of the risk management framework and the application of learning from the management of safeguarding concerns
- to assess the training and supports in place for managers in order to promote effective safeguarding practices
- to confirm how they ensure that staffing is appropriate and consistent to support the development of relationships with children
- to determine, in situations when staff are employed on a less than full-time basis, how the provider and centre manager ensure that this does not cause a negative impact on children and that continuity of care is maintained
- to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to ensure that interns, students and trainees are suitable
- to ensure that duties are delegated appropriately, where applicable.

Through a review of documents

Inspectors will review documents such as:

- relevant local safeguarding policies and procedures
- the risk register for the centre
- 'need to know' escalation reports to Tusla senior managers
- collective risk assessments
- minutes of staff team meetings
- minutes of management meetings
- annual review of the centre
- records relating to safeguarding concerns and complaints

- service improvement plans, audits and findings from reviews
- a sample of staff files, such as garda vetting, photographic identification, qualifications and references
- a sample of planned and actual staff roster
- workforce plans
- training needs analysis and training calendar for staff and management related to safeguarding
- recruitment compliance records on site – including agency staff sample
- CORU registration on staff files.

Compliance indicators

Indicators of compliance include:

- the management structure is clearly defined and identifies the lines of authority and accountability, specifies roles and details responsibilities for areas of service provision as they relate to safeguarding and child protection
- management systems are in place to ensure that the service provided is safe, appropriate to children's needs and consistent and effectively monitored
- there are safe and effective recruitment practices which ensure all staff working in the centre are recruited in line with the requirements of legislation
- the centre manager demonstrates sufficient knowledge of the legislation and their statutory responsibilities and has complied with the regulations and standards.
- there is a clear risk management structure in place that is effective in identifying and responding to safeguarding concerns
- there is auditing of safeguarding concerns with learnings informing quality improvement plans
- appropriate external oversight of the service, including routine and ongoing audits and monitoring of practices
- there is enough staff on duty with the right skills, qualifications and experience to meet the safeguarding needs of children at all times
- staffing levels take into account the statement of purpose and number and needs of children

- there is a consistent staff team delivering care to children and supporting the development of meaningful and trusting relationships
- there is an actual and planned staff roster
- there are identified keyworkers who have established relationships with children
- the assessed needs of children are met in a respectful, timely and safe manner, and there is continuity of care, particularly where staff are employed less than full-time.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- there is a review of quality and safety of care but findings, learning and or recommendations relating to safeguarding are not effectively implemented in a timely way to inform improvements in practice
- gaps are identified in the documentation but they do not result in a medium or high risk to children using the service
- there are enough staff on duty to meet the assessed needs of children, including safeguarding needs of children, but the planned roster does not fully match the staff on duty
- there is a reliance on agency staff and insufficient measures have been put in place to ensure consistency of care for children.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- management systems are inadequate to ensure that the service provided is safe, appropriate and effectively monitored
- there is no defined management structure, and staff are unaware of the relevant reporting mechanisms
- there are no clear lines of accountability for decision-making
- there are no appropriate arrangements in place for periods when the centre manager is absent from the residential centre
- safeguarding and child protection concerns are not identified or managed accordingly
- the number, qualifications, experience, suitability, skill-mix and availability of staff is inappropriate having regard to the statement of purpose and the number and needs of children placed in the residential centre
- there is evidence of negative outcomes for children due to staff shortages, and there is no planned and or actual staff roster in place

- the children do not have consistent and sustained relationships with a keyworker or centre staff
- no effective contingencies are in place to cover staff on leave
- recruitment practices are not in line with required standards and the relevant legislation.

Guidance on standards and regulations related to quality and safety

This section discusses standards and regulations related to the care and support children receive and if these are of a good quality and ensure that children are safe. It includes information about the care and supports children should expect, information on the standards and safety within their residential homes.

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

What a service striving for quality improvement looks like

Safeguarding is about respecting and upholding children's rights and in doing so promoting their welfare and protecting them from harm. The culture of the organisation is one that ensures the rights of children — as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in Irish law — are promoted and protected. Children are treated as equals and as individuals in their own right. There is a shared value system that respects all aspects of children's uniqueness, recognises their individuality and treats them as valued human beings. Safeguarding practices recognise and respect diversity, and they are inclusive of all children, taking account those who may be in a minority and or present with additional vulnerabilities.

The service promotes a child-centred approach through recognising, respecting and promoting children's rights, including their right to be safe, to be listened to and to participate in decisions made about their lives and their safety, while taking into account their age, ability and maturity.

Within a safeguarding context, it is recognised that there may be occasions when a child's wishes may be in conflict with what is regarded as appropriate or safe, by the adults responsible for their care. A good service recognises this, and ensures that every effort is made to communicate and educate children on the risks and safeguarding concerns informing decisions about them and their care. Decisions are communicated to children, as well as their parents and or guardians, effectively, taking into account each child's individual needs, including those related to age, ability, gender, sexuality, culture, religion, and ethnicity and or family circumstances. Safeguarding arrangements have due regard for each child's individual beliefs and values, and any language challenges or specific communication needs are effectively considered.

Policies and procedures adhere to international human rights instruments, legislation, regulation, national policy, professional guidance and evidence-based guidelines. Safeguarding practices in the children's residential centre respect and promote the rights of children.

Children are treated with dignity and respect at all times, including when staff are responding to behaviour that challenges. The provider and centre management team promote a rights-based approach in responding to behaviour that poses a safeguarding risk to children. Children have appropriate access to evidence-based specialist and therapeutic interventions as required. There is regular oversight and monitoring, including auditing of the staff team's approach to managing behaviour that challenges, which ensures effective oversight of practice and prompt identification of any intervention which in itself may pose a safeguarding risk to children or infringe on their rights; for example, a disproportionate use of a restrictive practice.

Alternative procedures are considered before any use of restrictive practices.¹ The provider ensures that children's rights, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are protected at all times during the use of restrictive practices. All restrictive practices are implemented in line with regulations and are reviewed on a regular basis in order to evaluate their necessity, impact and effectiveness. If a restrictive procedure is used, it is the least restrictive procedure for the shortest duration of time and this is managed in a dignified manner, in line with policy. All instances of the use of restrictive procedures, including the reasons

¹ A restrictive practice is the intentional restriction of a person's voluntary movement or behaviour...

for, the nature and duration of any action taken and sanctions imposed on a child, are recorded in the child's care record along with a record of approval. Oversight and monitoring is carried out routinely and includes a review and analysis of data on the use of restrictive practices to identify and respond to any trends, concerns or any breaches of children's rights.

What this means for the child

The promotion of children's rights is embedded in the provider's safeguarding practices for the centre. Children's identity is respected and they feel safe to express themselves and their identity at all times and with all staff in the centre.

Children are supported to express their views, feel listened to and empowered to participate in decisions made about safeguarding. They are communicated with in a way that takes account of their individual needs. Safeguarding measures and interventions are tailored to address presenting needs and risks for each child. Children are treated with dignity and their rights are respected at all times, including when staff are responding to behaviours that are unsafe.

Examples of information that will be reviewed and how this will be done

Through observation

Inspectors will observe:

- how staff and children interact; for example, staff members' responses to queries or concerns of children who use the service
- whether language used is appropriate to the child
- whether children's rights are promoted by staff and social workers
- children's meetings within the context of safeguarding issues and safety
- that children are treated in a respectful and caring way
- interactions between staff and children which indicates consideration of their cultural and religious beliefs
- how children's privacy and dignity is promoted and supported.

Through communication

Inspectors will communicate with children:

- to find out if they get to enjoy a way of life that enables self-determination and the opportunity to have fulfilling experiences; for example, can children make choices about the services and supports they use and how they use them
- to determine if different beliefs are provided for when safeguarding

measures are in place

- to determine if they require any specific services to support their communication and or involvement in decisions about their safeguarding or plans regarding their protection, and that these are provided, such as language interpretation services
- to explore their knowledge of rights, policies and procedures for the centre, and how they exercise choice
- to check if they are aware that there are restrictive procedures in place in the residential centre, including where applicable the use of bedroom alarms and CCTV
- to determine if they have been subjected to restrictive procedures in response to an identified safeguarding concern. To seek their opinion on the proportionality of these restrictions and or if they believe their rights have been impeded
- to find out whether they are given explanations when they need them and in a way that they understand
- to establish how consent is sought and how they are involved in decision-making
- to ask their opinion on how their rights are protected, respected and promoted in the residential centre.

Inspectors will communicate with staff:

- to explore how they promote and respect children's rights and how they can exercise choice with particular emphasis on safeguarding
- to determine what specialist services are available, if they are required, to aid children in engaging in decisions and choices, and how are they accessed
- to explore their knowledge of rights, policies and procedures and if these have been implemented consistently
- to explore their knowledge and understanding of upholding children's rights in the context of behavioural supports and restrictive practices.

Inspectors will speak with centre managers:

- to determine how appropriate safe care is provided in line with

evidenced-based practice

- to explore how they promote and respect children's rights and exercising choice with particular emphasis on safeguarding.

Through a review of documents

Inspectors will review documents such as:

- information for children on their rights and advocacy services
- records of children's meetings
- records of advocacy arrangements and or visits
- records of the use of specialist services and materials to support communication, such as language interpreters
- care and placement plans
- daily records
- records of restrictive practices, including restraint
- restrictive practice log or register
- management reviews and or audits of restrictive practices, including use of restraints.

Compliance indicators

Indicators of compliance include:

- the provider identifies and addresses any breach of rights promptly and systemically to ensure opportunities for improvement are captured
- safety planning and or service planning and delivery is responsive to diversity, including age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, family and civil status, race, language, religious beliefs and ethnic and cultural background of each child
- children are facilitated to exercise their civil, legal, and religious rights and can make informed decisions about the management of their care and are provided with appropriate information
- children are consulted and participate in how the residential centre is planned and run
- the environment is conducive to respecting children's privacy and dignity and they are encouraged to maintain their own privacy and dignity
- staff members treat children with dignity and respect at all times, including when responding to behaviours that challenge

- where restrictive procedures such as physical and environmental restraint are used, children's rights, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are upheld at all times
- restrictive procedures are applied in accordance with national policy and evidence-based practice and effectively safeguard children when they are used
- there is both internal and external monitoring of the approach in the residential centre to the management of behaviour that challenges to identify and respond to any safeguarding concerns or breaches of children's rights.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- children's rights are promoted in practice but appropriate information is not made available to children about their rights
- there are gaps in documentation, but children and their representatives report positive experiences of care and protection of their rights
- there are gaps in requirements for recording rights-based interventions, but care is delivered to a high standard and did not result in a medium to high risk to children.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- the provider does not address any breach of rights promptly and systemically to ensure improvements and that there is no repeat of such breaches
- safety planning does not appropriately consider children's diversity, including age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, family and civil status, race, language, religious beliefs and ethnic and cultural background
- children are not facilitated to exercise their civil, legal, and religious rights and are not provided with appropriate information to make informed decisions about their care
- children are not consulted and do not participate in safety planning
- children are not treated with dignity and respect at all times
- children's privacy and dignity are not maintained at all times
- children's rights are impeded upon during the use of restrictive procedures
- restrictive procedures are used excessively and or inappropriately or

without necessary approval and oversight, and place children's safety at risk

- reviews of interventions used in the management of behaviour that challenges do not identify or recognised safeguarding concerns or breaches of children's rights.

Standard 1.3

Each child exercises choice, has access to an advocacy service and is enabled to participate in making informed decisions about their care.

What a service striving for quality improvement looks like

The culture and ethos of the organisation is embodied by all staff, who clearly recognise their role as advocates for the children placed in the centre. This is especially important for children who have additional vulnerabilities and are at increased risk of experiencing harm; for example, children who may have communication difficulties, have experienced past trauma and or children with a disability. Staff facilitate a supportive environment at all times, and they are well equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise signs of abuse and the actions required to protect the children from harm. Continuity of staffing means that children have opportunities to established relationships of trust, an important factor in the safeguarding of children.

Children are consulted about and make decisions regarding the safety planning and supports they receive, and their views are actively and regularly sought by the service. Children's meetings are held regularly and children report that they are consulted with and enabled to participate in all aspects of their care. Children are facilitated and empowered to exercise choice and control across a range of daily activities, and their choices and decisions are respected. Children are supported to take risks appropriate to their age and stage of development and they are facilitated with opportunities for spending time with peers, developing social peer groups and friendships, as well as spending time alone.

Children are aware of independent advocacy services and have access to these services. Children can identify a trusting adult from whom they can seek advice and support when making decisions or expressing their wishes. Children receive support and guidance relevant to their individual needs. They are facilitated to assert their voice and self-advocate in an environment which respects challenges and or questions about decisions, particularly those which may be in contravention of a child's wishes.

What this means for the child

Children are supported to be active participants in the decisions that impact on their safety. Their views and preferences regarding day-to-day care at the centre are sought, listened to and reflected in the planning of centre activities. Children are given time to play and opportunities to have age-appropriate time alone. Children are supported to think about the choices they make and the potential impact these have on their ability to keep safe. Access to independent advocacy services is provided and children know how and when they can request additional support.

Children are involved in safety planning, are educated and informed about the safety concerns related to them, and the plans in place to keep them safe. They are supported by staff to develop skills in making safe choices.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done**Through observation****Inspectors will observe:**

- how staff and children interact; for example, staff members' responses to queries or concerns of children who use the service
- the decision-making process to see if children are supported and actively involved and given the freedom to exercise autonomy, choice and independence; for example, safeguarding decisions that form part of the child's daily routine, including household tasks or activities
- whether there is a proportionate balance between the choices children make, the risks involved and the child's safety
- if children have access to advocacy and information about their rights in a way they can understand.

Through communication**Inspectors will communicate with children:**

- to establish if they have opportunities for play and age-appropriate opportunities to be alone
- to find out their views on the systems and mechanisms in place for seeking out their input, including them in decisions about their safeguarding, and ensuring their views and opinions are valued and respected

- to establish if they have a keyworker with whom they are familiar with and who supports them in their safeguarding needs
- to establish how they have been enabled to participate in decisions about their safeguarding.

Inspectors will communicate with staff:

- to explore how they advocate and support children to make decisions regarding their safety and welfare
- to establish how they ensure children's views and opinions are respected, and how children are treated with kindness and are listened to
- to determine what measures and practices are employed which support children to make informed choices
- to explore their understanding of the key working role and how this is implemented in the context of the child's safeguarding needs
- to explore practices in the residential centre which promote, self-advocacy and self-protection
- to explore their understanding of expectations about keeping children involved and informed when safeguarding and or child protection risks and concerns arise for them.

Inspectors will communicate with centre managers:

- to determine their expectations about how children are enabled to participate in decisions about safeguarding; for example, involving them in discussions and decisions about having free time to participating in formal decisions regarding safeguarding
- to gain an understanding of systems and mechanisms in place which promote and support children to develop skills for self-advocacy and self-protection
- to establish where there are safeguarding concerns, the expectations with respect to keeping children involved and informed of all matters, including safety planning and reporting.

Through a review of documents

Inspectors will review documents such as:

- information for children on their rights, participation and safeguarding; for example, advocacy services and risks associated with use of social

<p>media and exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ records of children's meetings ▪ records of advocacy arrangements and or visits ▪ care and placement plans (safeguarding elements) ▪ records of key working sessions with children related to advocacy and safeguarding ▪ children's safety plans ▪ daily records.
<p>Compliance indicators</p>
<p>Indicators of compliance include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the residential centre is managed in a way that balances children's capacity to exercise personal independence and choice in their daily lives, with their safeguarding needs ▪ children are provided with the necessary information and supported to develop skills for self-protection ▪ children are consulted and participate in the development of plans for their own safety, when risks or concerns arise ▪ children are informed of the daily arrangements in the residential centre ▪ children are informed about how their personal information is managed ▪ children have access to advocacy services and information about their rights ▪ children are afforded the necessary supports, including specialist supports and or expertise, to address risks and concerns for their safety and enable them to develop a clear understanding of these risks.
<p>Indicators of substantial compliance include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ children have some opportunities to participate in decisions about safeguarding but these are not fully documented ▪ the information on accessing advocacy is not up to date but this has not negatively impacted on children accessing advocates.
<p>Indicators of non-compliance include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the residential centre is not managed in a way that balances children's capacity to exercise personal independence and choice in their daily lives, with their safeguarding needs

- children cannot make informed decisions about their own lives and safety as they are not provided with appropriate information and support to understand relevant risks
- children are not effectively consulted and included in decisions about their safety, and safety plans are devised without their participation
- children do not have access to advocacy services and information about their rights.

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

What a service striving for quality improvement looks like

To effectively safeguard children, the care and support they receive must be based on their individual needs. Excellence in achieving individualised assessment and personal planning is evident when there is a strong and visible child-centred culture within an organisation and children receive the care they actually need.

A good provider and centre manager recognise the importance of assessing children before admission to ensure that they have the ability and facilities to support them to live a full and fulfilling life and safely support their specific needs. The assessment is reviewed again on admission to ensure it is still accurate and to quickly identify any changes required. Any potential impact on safeguarding concerns for children currently living in the residential centre or on a child being admitted are carefully considered and assessed before admission of the child. The assessment identifies and documents the specific safeguarding needs for the child which are incorporated into their care plan and placement plan outlining actions to meet these needs.

Each child in the residential centre has an up-to-date care plan which is

developed and recorded in line with the Child Care (Placement of Children in Residential Care) Regulations, 1995. The development of care plans are coordinated and implemented through collaboration between a child's allocated social worker and their residential care placement. Each child has a placement plan which reflects the goals, objectives and actions identified within their care plan. Children's plans for access with their families, their education, health, and religion, social and interpersonal needs are all documented and are up to date. Children's plans are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure ongoing progress and to support children to achieve their full potential in each area of their lives.

Children's placements are supported by clear plans for managing challenges, including crisis management plans, absence management plans and safety plans, all of which are developed with children, their social workers and important people in their lives. These support plans are actively reviewed and updated as required, safeguarding risks are effectively identified as they arise, and plans to address risks are clearly recorded and implemented. Children's need and aftercare supports are actively considered from age 16. All children preparing to leave care have an allocated aftercare worker and an up-to-date aftercare plan which is based on an assessment of their needs and designed to support them to live successfully after they leave their residential home.

For the purpose of this focused inspection programme, the review of a sample of care plans will pay particular attention to the safeguarding elements within the plans and how children are supported by the work of the residential centre staff in partnership with the children's social workers, and all other people involved in the children's care plans to address safeguarding risks.

Children's care plans evolve throughout their placement and include actions with clearly defined time frames as well as the people responsible for progressing these. Care plans identify specific vulnerabilities and or safeguarding concerns and adequately address these concerns. The child, their parents and where applicable their guardian ad litem (a court-appointed advocate for a child in specified court proceedings) will be given an opportunity to consider and contribute to all aspects of the care plan, including safety planning in each child-in-care review² and as required in the intervening period. Plans such as placement plans, crisis management plans, absence management plans and aftercare plans identify steps agreed to meet the safeguarding needs of each child. The allocated social worker arranges for the review of the child's care plan in line with the regulations. When risks arise within their placement for a child, the staff team are proactive in requesting a special review of their care, in

² A child-in-care review is a meeting of the child, social workers, birth family and carers to form a plan for the child.

circumstances where children's needs, risks to their safety or safeguarding concerns are not being adequately addressed.

Children are visited in line with the requirements of the Child Care (Placement of Children in Residential Care) Regulations, 1995.³ Staff advocate on behalf of children to ensure children are met with by their allocated social worker in line with the regulations and more frequently if required when there are safeguarding concerns.

Children are supported by the staff team to develop safeguarding skills awareness and knowledge of how to protect and promote their own social development, as well as their physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing and protect themselves from harm. Health promotion initiatives prioritise the importance of good physical and mental health and wellbeing through guidance and advice on use of social media, smoking prevention and cessation, and sexual health and so on. There is a focus on assisting and supporting children to develop skills in relation to assessing risk and making safe choices.

What this means for the child

Children are visited by their social worker to ensure they are safe and their needs are being met. Children are involved in the development of their care plan with their social worker, staff team and family as appropriate, and such plans are based on their assessed needs. The child has a placement plan which ensures that they are supported by the residential centre staff in meeting their safeguarding needs as set out in their care plan. The placement plan contains information about them which outlines the kind of support they may need to keep them safe. Children are involved in safeguarding plans. They will also be involved in updating this plan as they grow up and as their needs and goals develop and change. All staff caring for the child know this information so that they can give the child the care and support they need to achieve these goals. Children are provided with knowledge and awareness to identify risks as well as vulnerabilities which may increase risk to their safety, and they are supported and prepared to protect themselves.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done

³ Regulation 24 (1) (a) and (b) At intervals not exceeding three months during the period of two years commencing on the date on which the child was placed in the residential centre, the first visit being within one month of that date, and thereafter at intervals not exceeding six months.

Through observation**Inspectors will observe:**

- safeguarding practices to determine whether they reflect the care plan for each child
- meetings and conferences regarding children's care and placement planning and reviews, if relevant and opportunities are available during inspections
- daily handover and or team meeting, with a particular focus on discussion of safeguarding risks, concerns and plans
- communication between the social workers, staff team and management team
- the child's participation in their care planning and placement planning
- management of safeguarding risks to determine if they are managed positively and appropriately.

Through communication**Inspectors will communicate with children**

- to find out their views on and experience of their level of involvement and support in the development, implementation and review of the care planning process as relevant to safeguarding
- to verify how their care plan has been made available to them
- to explore the progress being made in implementing each child's care plan with particular emphasis on safeguarding.

Inspectors will communicate with staff:

- to confirm how the care plan is developed, implemented and reviewed
- to verify how the care plan has been made available to the child
- to explore what work is done with children to ensure their ongoing development and support them to reach their full potential
- to establish how they ensure children have adequate skills awareness and knowledge of how to protect and promote their own wellbeing and protect themselves from harm
- to identify what therapeutic supports are in place for children

- to seek their views of the admission process and the identification of potential safeguarding risks to children and their impact on children already placed.

Inspectors will communicate with centre managers:

- to establish what governance arrangements are in place to ensure the care plan and the placement plan are fully implemented and reviewed when required
- to find out how the placement plan informs day-to-day safeguarding
- to explore what work is done with children to develop
- to establish how they ensure children have adequate skills awareness and knowledge of how to protect and promote their own wellbeing and protect themselves from harm
- to identify what mechanisms are in place for ensuring children access specialist supports as required to meet their identified needs
- to determine the systems in place to risk-assess the suitability of proposed admissions to the residential centre, in particular how potential safeguarding risks to children being admitted and the potential impact on children already placed are determined and managed.

Inspectors will communicate with the child's allocated social worker and guardian ad litem:

- to seek their understanding of the safeguarding arrangements for the child in the residential centre
- to explore their understanding of the needs of the child as set out in the care plan.

Through a review of documents

Inspectors will review documents such as:

- a sample of care plans, placement plans, individual crisis management plans, safety plans, aftercare plans and risks assessments (as appropriate)
- relevant records that reflect the implementation of care plans with particular emphasis on identified risks, vulnerabilities and safety planning for children; for example, safety plans, daily logs and care record

- collective risk assessments (for children admitted to the service in the six months prior to the inspection)
- records of reviews of care and placement plans
- records of key working sessions regarding safeguarding
- records of therapeutic supports and or specialist services provided in line with the care plan
- minutes of meetings relating to planning and reviews for children as related to safeguarding
- reports from social workers and guardians ad litem
- team meeting minutes.

Compliance indicators

Indicators of compliance include:

- the centre manager oversees the implementation of a care plan for each child staying in the children's residential centre
- children's care plans and placement plans reflect assessment of all possible safeguarding concerns and risks, and these are adequately addressed in both plans
- there are effective mechanisms in place to ensure the safeguarding needs of each child placed in the residential centre are assessed prior to their admission to the centre
- children have placement plans which are reflective of their care plan and identified safeguarding needs
- the relevant adults including parents, guardians and professionals contribute to the development of the care plan
- children's views and opinions are sought out and considered as part of the care planning process
- the care plan is reviewed as required, when the level of risk to the child changes or there is a lack of progress, and appropriate actions need to be taken to help the child
- the care plan considers the welfare of the child and progress achieved

- the child, parents and guardian ad litem have opportunities to consider and contribute, if appropriate, to all aspects of the care plan
- non-implementation of any part of the care plan is discussed at the child in care review and subsequent actions are taken
- each child is supported and facilitated to access supports, including specialist supports as required
- children's care and placement plans and corresponding interventions support their development of the skills, awareness and knowledge required for self-protection and promote their social development as well as physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- while there are appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place, there are some gaps in the associated documentation that do not result in a medium or high risk to children using the service.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- the care plan is not reviewed as required, when the level of risk to the child changes or there is a lack of progress, and appropriate actions are not taken to help the child
- the care plan does not have agreed actions and timelines
- the care plan does not consider all the vulnerabilities and risks associated with the welfare of the child and progress achieved
- the child, parents and guardian ad litem are not given an opportunity to consider and contribute, if appropriate, to all aspects of the care plan and or safety plan
- non-implementation of any part of the care plan, in particular safety planning, is not discussed at the child in care review and subsequent actions are not taken
- placement plans and interventions are ineffective and do not meet the identified needs of children
- children's safety, health and wellbeing is adversely impacted during their placement in the residential centre
- children are not safe and are not protected from harm

- children are experiencing abuse and or harm and this is not effectively identified and managed in a timely way.

Standard 2.3

The residential centre is child centred and homely, and the environment promotes the safety and wellbeing of each child.

Note: This standard will not be routinely examined as part of this inspection programme but will be an option for inclusion by inspectors, if required.

Regulation 7: Accommodation

Regulation 12: Fire precautions

Regulation 13: Safety precautions

Regulation 14: Insurance

What a service striving for quality improvement looks like

Residential centres provide a homely and safe environment that promotes safeguarding and supports children's wellbeing and development. The residential centre matches the description in the statement of purpose, is warm and well ventilated and meets children's need for private and communal living spaces. Children have their own bedroom. However, sibling groups are facilitated to share a bedroom if that is their preference and is appropriate. Children have sufficient space to store personal belongings.

The provider is conscious of the importance of safeguarding and explores opportunities to balance risk management with the homeliness of the residential centre and the children's wishes for their own homely environment. The layout of the residential centre promotes the safety of children and staff. Reasonable measures are taken to prevent significant events.

The layout and features of each residential centre are suitable to provide care for the number and needs of the children who live there. The design and layout of the premises ensures that each child can enjoy living in an accessible, safe, comfortable and homely environment. The design, layout and décor of the centre supports the promotion of independence, recreation and leisure, and enables safe care for all who live there. For example, the premises is suitable for staff to safely use physical interventions if required to keep a child safe and in line with their behaviour management plan. The provider ensures that where

refurbishment or any alterations to the physical premises takes place, the safeguarding needs of children are appropriately considered and managed.

The living environment is stimulating and provides opportunities for rest and recreation. Appropriate and accessible indoor and outdoor recreational areas are provided in the service.

The centre is appropriately maintained and issues are resolved promptly and appropriately, as they arise. Oversight and monitoring of the premises is carried out on a routine basis and all maintenance of necessary safety measures — including fire equipment, car servicing and general maintenance — are kept to a high standard. Health and safety audits and checks are routinely undertaken. Actions to address risks or concerns are clearly identified and promptly addressed.

What this means for the child

Children enjoy living in a homely, comfortable and engaging environment that meets all of their needs. Children have their own bedroom and space to store their personal belongings. Children have space to rest and play. Children can display their own personal belongings, such as family photographs. The physical premises supports each child's safeguarding needs, including the safe management of behaviour that challenges.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done

Through observation

Inspectors will observe:

- by walking around the residential centre and its grounds, how the design and layout impacts on the child's quality of life and protects children from harm
- if children can move unimpeded around the residential centre, taking into account factors such as accessibility and whether any alterations have been made, and whether these enhance children's quality of life and safety
- if the internal and external areas of the premises are secure and safe, and whether there is evidence of an ongoing maintenance programme.

Through communication**Inspectors will communicate with children:**

- to find out their views and experiences on how the premises meets their safeguarding needs and impacts on their day-to-day life, as well as the level of involvement they have in decision-making about any possible changes
- to determine that they have adequate private space, including their own bedroom and adequate secure storage space for their belongings
- to explore their views on the safety and adequacy of the residential centre premises.

Inspectors will communicate with staff:

- to determine their views on whether the internal and external areas are suitable for the care, supervision and support of children
- to explore their views on the suitability of the location, structure and maintenance of the residential centre for the safe care of children.

Inspectors will communicate with centre managers:

- to determine what risks, if any, are associated with the premises
- to determine what measures are in place to ensure the premises meets children's safeguarding needs, including behaviour supports and or restrictive practices.

Through a review of documents**Inspectors will review documents such as:**

- records relevant to the maintenance and upkeep of premises, and risks as appropriate
- fire register and relevant fire safety records, including service records
- health and safety audits.

Compliance indicators**Indicators of compliance include:**

- the design and layout of the residential centre are in line with the statement of purpose
- there is adequate private and communal accommodation which promotes the safe and effective care of children

- the premises meet the needs of all children, and the design and layout of the premises promote their safety, dignity, independence and wellbeing
- there is suitable heating, lighting and ventilation in the premises
- each child has their own bedroom
- there is communal space for children suitable for social, cultural and religious activities
- adequate space, laundry facilities and suitable storage spaces are available for the personal use of children
- there are enough toilets, bathrooms, showers, with hot and cold running water, to meet the needs of children
- there is a suitable indoor and outdoor recreational activities which are safe for use and appropriately maintained
- best practice is used to achieve and promote accessibility
- if needed, alterations are made to the residential centre to ensure it is accessible to all
- the physical environment is clean and kept in good structural and decorative repair, with adequate furnishings and suitable to meet the safeguarding needs of children.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- an adequate number of baths, showers and toilets are available and do not pose a risk to children; however, facilities are in need of renovation and there is a plan in place for the necessary work
- storage for children's personal belongings is available but limited
- furnishings are in need of repair but there is a plan in place to address this
- there are adequate fire safety measures and equipment in place but checks and records are not up to date
- there are ongoing repairs and maintenance concerns which are not addressed in a timely way, but do not pose a safety risks to children.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- the design and layout of the residential centre is not in line with the statement of purpose and does not meet children's assessed needs in relation to safeguarding
- the residential centre is not child-friendly or conducive to child-centred

care and practices

- the building is not adequately lit, heated or ventilated
- the residential centre is unclean and or not kept in a good state of repair
- private and or communal accommodation does not meet children's needs
- there is not enough suitable storage
- there are not enough toilet and washing facilities or hot or cold running water
- equipment is not maintained in good working order
- children are restricted in accessing areas due to the poor design of the building
- there is no review of the residential centre's accessibility
- required alterations to make the residential centre accessible to all are not carried out
- children do not have their own bedroom
- there is no suitable indoor or outdoor recreation facilities for children
- there are risks associated with fire safety within the residential centre which had not been identified and or addressed by the provider.

Standard 2.5

Each child experiences integrated care which is coordinated effectively within and between services.

Note: This standard will be inspected, where appropriate, considering the relevance to young people resident.

What a service striving for quality improvement looks like

Discharges of children from the residential centre are planned, and children are supported throughout this process. Leaving residential care marks a significant transition in the child's life, one which can give rise to safeguarding concerns as their vulnerability can be heightened. Discharge planning includes an assessment of the child's safeguarding needs and work to be undertaken with them to strengthen their resilience and safe-care skills. The arrangements for the discharge of any child is carried out in consultation with them, their parents or guardian or guardians, allocated social worker and others as appropriate.

Where applicable, children are helped to prepare for adulthood and have opportunities to learn life skills, to take developmentally appropriate risks and assume increasing levels of responsibility as they grow older, in line with their age, ability and stage of development. While supporting young people to become more independent, this is always balanced carefully with minimising risk and keeping them safe. Children are prepared for their transition to other services or independent living and all transitions occur in a timely manner with planned supports in place.

What this means for the child

When a child is being discharged from the service, they are involved in decisions made and are supported by the staff team as they are discharged or moved to another service. All staff involved in the child's care work together to ensure they are aware of children's vulnerabilities and to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place. Information about children is shared with the people who need it so that new people caring for them know about their safeguarding needs and their plans for their future. Young people are made aware of this sharing of information. Children are helped to prepare for adulthood and or the transition to another service and have opportunities to learn life skills to keep themselves safe appropriate to their age and stage of development. Before children leave the centre, they will be provided with an opportunity to tell the staff team what it was like to live there.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done

Through observation

Inspectors will observe:

- communication between the social workers and the staff and management team regarding safeguarding arrangements during transition to a new service or during a discharge
- the child's participation in their aftercare planning
- how day-to-day practice supports children's preparation for independent living and aftercare as appropriate
- management of risk to determine if risks associated with children moving from the service or leaving care is managed positively and appropriately
- if children are enabled to make choices about their move from the residential centre and are effectively informed, supported and prepared

for possible risks associated with such choices

- how discharges are managed and celebrated, if this is relevant during inspections.

Through communication

Inspectors will speak with children:

- on their experience of the care and preparation for leaving care or moving on from the residential centre
- on their preparation and planning for their life after care, including aftercare plans and supports
- on their awareness of individual vulnerabilities and risks and how the staff have worked with them to support their management of these after they leave the centre.

Inspectors will speak with staff:

- to determine how they plan and manage discharges
- to determine how they prepare children for leaving care, as appropriate
- to explore the key risks to children preparing to leave the residential centre and how these are assessed and managed, including specialist supports, key working focus and so on.

Inspectors will speak with centre managers:

- to explore risks and barriers to children preparing to move from the residential centre and what mechanisms are in place to support the management of these
- to gain an understanding of the communication systems and arrangements between the residential centre and the child's social work team in delivering effective safeguarding and better outcomes for children
- to explore arrangements in place which promote and support continuity of care, sharing of information on vulnerabilities and specific risks as appropriate.

Inspectors will speak with the child's social worker:

- to determine how a child's discharge is planned and managed to ensure adequate safeguarding, continuity of care and communication
- to ensure identified vulnerabilities and safeguarding risks are

appropriately and effectively communicated to follow-on placement supports.

Through a review of documents

Inspectors will review documents such as:

- the policy on discharges from the residential centre
- where appropriate, records of children's training in life skills in preparation for adulthood and independent living on discharge from the residential centre
- records on services and supports available for children leaving the residential centre
- minutes of meetings relating to the child's discharge or transition between services
- feedback provided by children in relation to their placement.

Compliance indicators

Indicators of compliance include:

- discharges are discussed, planned for and agreed with the child, their parents or guardian or guardians, allocated social worker and between services where applicable
- discharges take place in a planned and safe manner
- where appropriate, training in the life skills required in preparation for adulthood and independent living is provided prior to discharge from the residential centre
- children's vulnerabilities are recognised, and supports are in place to ensure a planned transition that is based on the needs of the child.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- training in the life skills that are required in preparation for adulthood and independent living is provided but some children require additional supports which are not in place in a timely way
- while there are appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place, there are some gaps in the associated documentation that do not result

in a medium or high risk to children using the service.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- training in safeguarding and life skills that are required in preparation for adulthood and independent living is not provided
- children are discharged from the residential centre without consultation, planning or agreement
- discharges take place in an unplanned and or unsafe manner
- discharges are not in accordance with the child's care plan
- children are discharged from placement without adequate safe arrangements in place for their care.

Standard 3.1

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

What a service striving for quality improvement looks like

Every individual has the right to feel protected and safe from all forms of abuse. Safeguarding is, first and foremost, about proactively protecting people. The culture is one of openness and transparency, where children can raise and discuss any issues without prejudice. The provider is vigilant to emerging safeguarding concerns and is responsive in providing additional support to ensure the child is safe and protected from exploitation and or harm.

Children's residential centres are focused on the individual child and their care and support needs. Children's residential centres promote a child-centred approach. The residential centre considers the child's need for protection and support and any specific directions in relation to their care, including those directed by a court.

Care practices, policies and procedures should promote and protect the safety and welfare of children placed in the children's residential centre. There is a safeguarding statement in line with Children First Act (2015). The safeguarding policy and procedures adhere to international human rights instruments, relevant policies as outlined in Children First and relevant legislation, regulation, national policy, professional guidance and evidence-based guidelines. The provider's

approach to risk management in the service safeguards children and supports responsible risk-taking appropriate to their age, capacity and presenting risks. The relevant policies and procedures have been implemented, and staff are knowledgeable regarding their content.

Safeguarding training is provided to staff and there is evidence of learning being applied in respect of the individual safeguarding needs of children. Staff are provided with access to specialised safeguarding training when particular vulnerabilities or risks arise for young people in their care. There is an emphasis on skill development in the staff team. The training needs of staff in relation to safeguarding are assessed, and a plan is in place to meet these needs. There is monitoring of the training provided and regular reviews of the application of the learning to care practices in the residential centre.

Effective policies and supporting procedures are implemented that makes sure children are protected from all forms of abuse. Children are protected by practices that promote their safety in relation to:

- recruitment, selection, training, assignment and supervision of staff in accordance with the statement of purpose for the centre
- the duty of each staff member to report any concerns for the safety of the children
- protected disclosure system to enable staff to report any concerns in relation to the safety of children
- the safe and appropriate use of restrictive practices
- access to an advocate or advocacy services
- children's private access to their representatives, family, advocates and external professionals
- effective monitoring systems.

Children feel safe and are supported to develop the knowledge, self-awareness, understanding and skills for self-care and protection cognisant of their age, personal history, past trauma and stage of development. Staff work in partnership with children, families and their social worker to promote the child's safety and wellbeing. Areas of vulnerability are identified and individual safeguards are put in place and recorded in each child's care record. The provider ensures preventative measures are taken when potential risks and harm are identified to ensure the safeguarding response is timely and effective.

Children are central to safeguarding planning and decision-making. They are assisted and supported to develop the skills and awareness needed for self-care and protection. They are provided with information, in an accessible format,

which describes the procedures that are in place to protect them and to whom they may direct any safeguarding concerns they may have.

Staff have received the appropriate training in safeguarding and in the prevention and the detection and response to abuse. Staff are knowledgeable about how to recognise and respond to the possibility of abuse, such as online exploitation, bullying or coercive control. When risks present, staff ensure effective steps are taken to protect a child and to contribute to their ongoing safety, and they are clear on their roles as mandated persons, as applicable.

Where an allegation has been made by or about a child or a safeguarding concern is identified within the residential centre, it is reported and managed in line with relevant legislation, national guidance and policies. The centre manager takes all reasonable and proportionate interim measures to protect the child, pending the outcome of any assessment or investigation. The staff team are available to assist; for example, attending strategy meetings as required and or sharing information to inform a social work assessment as required in line with Children First. Parents and guardians are informed and updated in relation to any incident, allegation, suspicion or investigation of exploitation, abuse or neglect.

Should safeguarding concerns arise that do not meet the threshold for social work intervention but give rise to concerns about the vulnerabilities of the child, the staff team assesses the risk, consults with relevant professionals as appropriate and identifies a plan to address risks.

A designated liaison person, knowledgeable about child protection, is appointed to act as a liaison with outside agencies and as a resource person for children, staff members, or carers who have child protection concerns. Staff know the designated liaison person, and their deputy. The designated liaison person also ensures that reporting procedures within the residential centre are followed so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to the relevant social work department within Tusla. Staff members are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons to report child protection concerns and there are clear processes in place to facilitate staff to exercise these responsibilities.

The provider is proactive in continuous quality improvement. Oversight and monitoring is carried out on a routine basis. The effectiveness of interventions and practices within the centre, at ensuring children's safety and protection, is reviewed and evaluated.

What this means for the child

Children feel protected and safe while living in the centre. Staff caring for children are trained to support and protect children from all types of abuse. Children are supported to develop an awareness and knowledge of self-care and protection. Children can talk to staff about any worries or fears they may have. Staff are responsive to any emerging safeguarding concerns and have a plan to follow if they are worried about children's safety. Children are central to safeguarding planning and decision-making. When children make disclosures of abuse they are believed and supported to access services and interventions as required.

Examples of information and evidence that will be reviewed and how this will be done**Through observation****Inspectors will observe:**

- how the provider's policy on safeguarding in the residential centre is implemented in practice
- staff interaction with children who use the service and with colleagues, social workers and external professionals, as opportunities arise
- staff members' responses to queries or safeguarding concerns of children who use the service
- meetings and conferences regarding children's safety, care and placement planning and reviews
- communication between staff and management team on safeguarding and child protection risks and concerns.

Through communication**Inspectors will communicate with children:**

- to explore whether they feel safe in the residential centre and how they have been supported to develop their knowledge, self-awareness, understanding and skills required for self-care and protection
- to determine what they would do if they had concerns for their safety
- to determine whether they have raised any safeguarding concerns in the residential centre and how this was responded to
- to determine if they have received information in an accessible format

that supports them to keep safe and includes the steps to take when they are concerned about their safety.

Inspectors will communicate with staff:

- to explore their knowledge and awareness of safeguarding practices and expectations in the residential centre
- to explore their knowledge of their statutory obligations as mandated persons
- to determine if they have received appropriate training and know how to put this training into practice in order to protect children
- to determine if they are aware of the policy and procedures for reporting abuse
- to determine how safeguarding practices and procedures are monitored
- to explore mechanisms and preventative measures in place, which promote safety and support children to avoid safeguarding risks and child protection risks and concerns
- to determine how safeguarding training is applied in practice to strengthen safeguarding responses to children.

Inspectors will communicate with centre managers:

- to explore key safeguarding and child protection risks and concerns within the residential centre at the time of inspection
- to ensure training provided to staff in respect of safeguarding and child protection is of good quality and responsive to the safeguarding needs of the children
- to explore what mechanisms are in place to ensure that centre staff work in partnership with children, their families, social worker and guardians in identifying, managing and reviewing safeguarding and child protection risks and concerns
- to determine the systems in place for collaborative working with social workers and guardians to address safeguarding and child protection risks when they arise for children placed in the residential centre.

Inspectors will communicate with the child's social worker:

- to determine if safeguarding concerns about children are reported in an appropriate and timely way
- to establish their view on the knowledge and skills of the centre staff and managers, with respect to the identification, assessment and management of risks
- to determine the systems in place for collaborative working to address safeguarding and child protection risks when they emerge for children placed in the residential centre.

Through a review of documents

Inspectors will review documents such as:

- the policy on safeguarding of children, including reporting of concerns and or allegations of abuse to statutory agencies
- staff training records
- records documenting, and records of the investigation of, any incident, allegation or suspicion of abuse or exploitation
- minutes of meetings relating to allegations or suspicions of abuse or exploitation
- reports from social workers relating to safeguarding and child protection concerns
- audits and reviews of child protection concerns/ significant event notifications and others as relevant to the focus of the inspection
- care records
- centre's safeguarding statement
- safety plans in place for children
- individual risk assessments
- key working records
- protected disclosures policy.

Compliance indicators

Indicators of compliance include:

- *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017) is implemented
- the provider has prepared in writing, adopted and implemented a safeguarding policy and procedures on matters set out in the regulations
- the written policy and procedures are available to staff
- there is safeguarding statement available, read and understood by staff and managers in the residential centre
- practices are in place to ensure that children are protected and safe from all forms of abuse
- staff have up-to-date knowledge and skills, appropriate to their roles, regarding protection and safeguarding children who use the service
- staff and managers have the skills and are knowledgeable on the increased risks and vulnerabilities relevant to children in care, including risks of sexual, criminal, economic exploitation, child trafficking and institutional abuse, and indicators of such risks are identified and managed
- where there has been an incident, allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect in relation to a child, the requirements of the national guidance for the protection and welfare of children and any relevant statutory requirements are complied with
- staff are aware of the protected disclosures policy.

Indicators of substantial compliance include:

- *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017) is not fully implemented; for example, while there are appropriate policies, procedures and practices in place, there are some gaps in the associated documentation; however, these gaps do not result in a medium or high risk to children using the service.

Indicators of non-compliance include:

- *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017) is not being implemented
- the relevant policies and procedures are neither prepared in writing, nor adopted and or implemented
- care practices do not demonstrate the adoption and implementation of policies and procedures that reflect best practice

- written policies and procedures are not available to staff, or staff have poor awareness of their content
- staff do not know what to do in the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse
- children do not know what to do if they experience abuse
- incidents, allegations, suspicions of abuse at the residential centre were neither appropriately investigated in accordance with the provider's policy for the centre nor *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017)
- policies and procedures are not reviewed and updated in accordance with legislation and best practice
- relevant staff are not aware of their statutory obligations as mandated persons
- there is no designated liaison person
- staff have poor knowledge of risks and vulnerabilities relevant to children in care, including risks of sexual, criminal, economic exploitation, child trafficking and institutional abuse — and children are not safe or protected from harm as a result
- staff are not aware of the protected disclosures policy.

Appendix 1 — Bibliography and resources

Additional HIQA guidance documents for providers:

- Health Information and Quality Authority. *Guidance for Designated Centres — Restraint Procedures*. Dublin: Health Information and Quality Authority; 2016
- Health Information and Quality Authority. *Supporting people's autonomy: a guidance document*. Dublin: Health Information and Quality Authority; 2016
- Health Information and Quality Authority. *Guidance for providers of health and social care services — communicating in plain English*. Dublin: Health Information and Quality Authority; 2015
- Health Information and Quality Authority. *Guidance for providers of health and social care services for children — communicating in plain English with children and their families*. Dublin: Health Information and Quality Authority; 2015

External publications

United Nations. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Geneva: United Nations; 1989. Available online from: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*. Dublin: The Stationery Office; 2017. Available online from: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/114c50-children-first-national-guidelines-for-the-protection-and-welfare-of/>.

Keeping Children Safe. *The International Child Safeguarding Standards: How to implement them*. Skipton, UK: Keeping Children Safe; 2024. Available online from: <https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/international-child-safeguarding-standards/>

Appendix 2 – Revision history

Publication date	Title	Summary of changes
February 2025	Guidance on safeguarding for statutory children's residential centres	First published



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