

Statutory foster care service

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

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

Name of Child and Family Agency (Tusla) region:	Dublin Mid Leinster
Timeframe of HIQA follow-up monitoring activity	<p>Commenced on: 24 July 2018</p> <p>Self-assessment and statement of compliance forms issued to each area.</p> <p>Fieldwork:</p> <p>24-25 July 2018</p> <p>Report finalised:</p> <p>09/11/ 2018</p>

About HIQA monitoring of statutory foster care services

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

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

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

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

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

Child and Family Agency (Tusla)

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

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

HIQA Monitoring of TUSLA foster care services in 2017

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

HIQA conducted themed foster care inspections in the Tusla Dublin Mid Leinster (DML) Region between February and October 2017 in three of the four service areas: Dublin South East/Wicklow, Dublin South Central, and the Midlands.*

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

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

*A themed foster care inspection of the Dublin South West/Kildare/West Wicklow area of the DML region was carried out in 2018.

Table 1. Judgments of 2017 themed foster care inspections in the four service areas of the Tusla Dublin Mid Leinster Region

Service area	Standard 10— Safeguarding and Child Protection	Standard 14a— GFC Assessments	Standard 14b— RFC Assessments	Standard 15 — Support and Supervision	Standard 16 — Training	Standard 17 — Reviews	Standard 21— Recruitment and Retention	Standard 23 Foster Care Committee
Dublin South East/Wicklow	Non-Compliant Moderate	Compliant	Non-Compliant Moderate	Substantially Compliant	Non-Compliant Moderate	Non-compliant Major	Non-Compliant Moderate	Non-Compliant Moderate
Dublin South Central	Non-compliant Major	Compliant	Non-compliant Major	Non-compliant Major	Non-Compliant Moderate	Non-compliant Major	Non-compliant Major	Non-compliant Major
Midlands	Non-compliant Major	Compliant	Non-Compliant Moderate	Non-Compliant Moderate	Substantially Compliant	Compliant	Non-compliant Major	Compliant

Table 2. Judgments of 2017 themed foster care inspections in two additional standards - Midlands only¹

Service area	Standard 7— Care planning and review	Standard 8— Matching carers with children and young people
Midlands	Substantially Compliant	Non-Compliant Moderate

Key to table

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

RFC = relative foster carers.

¹ These two standards were added to the Midlands thematic inspections, due to findings under these standards on previous inspections.

HIQA follow up in 2018

HIQA carried out follow-up monitoring of the foster care services in three out of four service areas in the Dublin Mid Leinster Region in July 2018. Based on the findings of the 2017 themed inspections, which focused on eight standards in two of the areas, and 10 standards in the Midlands area, and the resulting action plans, a statement of progress in the form of a self-assessment was completed by each service area. The self-assessment required:

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

Following receipt of the completed statement of progress from the three service areas in the Dublin Mid Leinster Region, the information was reviewed by an inspector. In order to source further evidence of progress made, HIQA conducted inspection fieldwork in two service areas, namely, Dublin South East/Wicklow and Dublin South Central.

A desktop review was carried out for the Midlands area. Following the review of the statements of progress, inspectors sought some additional information from the area manager to support the areas judgment of its current compliance rating. This supporting information and documentation was reviewed by a HIQA inspector and a teleconference was conducted with the area manager for the Midlands area.

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

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

Foster care service in the Tusla Dublin Mid Leinster Region

The foster care teams in the three areas of the Dublin Mid Leinster region varied in that two areas had offices based in two locations, and one area had fostering staff based in five offices located throughout the region. Link social workers were managed by team leaders who reported to principal social workers. This area also had a regional team specifically for the recruitment, assessment and training of foster care applicants (RAFT). The areas had both general and relative foster care households providing a service for children in care (see Table 2).

Table 2. Numbers of general (non-relative) and relative foster carers in the Dublin Mid Leinster Region in 2018

Service area	General foster carers at time of follow up	Relative foster carers at time of follow up	Number of children in care ²
Dublin South East/Wicklow	153	76	229
Dublin South Central	132	104	321
Midlands	150	66	366

Summary of findings

Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services

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

Standard 10 - Safeguarding and child protection

The 2017 thematic inspection found moderate non-compliance in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area in relation to this standard. The areas of further improvement related to implementing an effective system to ensure that Garda Síochána (police) vetting for foster carers was renewed every three years, Children First training for foster carers was completed and notification of allegations and serious concerns were made to the foster care committee.

² Data provided by the service areas

Data provided by the area in 2017 showed that 83 foster carers or 37% of all foster carers at that time had not had their Garda Síochána (police) vetting updated in more than three years. Garda Síochána (police) vetting was updated as part of the foster care review but very few foster carer reviews took place in the service area and there was no other mechanism in place to ensure that Garda Síochána (police) vetting was updated in a systemic way.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area had made some improvement by introducing a system to identify when foster carers required up-dated Garda Síochána (police) vetting. In addition the area had improved on the number of foster carers that required updated Garda Síochána (police) vetting from 37% (83) in 2017 down to 20% (42) in 2018.

The area had also implemented a notification procedure to notify the foster care committee of all allegations and serious concerns.

However, inspectors found in the follow-up inspection in 2018, that further improvement was required to ensure that the system for updating Garda Síochána (police) vetting was effective. There were still 42 foster carers who required up-dated Garda Síochána (police) vetting. In addition, in 2018 there were 32 young people over 16 and adults over 18 that had not been Garda vetted, which was a new finding. The issue of Garda Síochána (police) vetting was escalated to the acting area manager and a satisfactory written response was received which outlined a plan to ensure applications for Garda Síochána (police) vetting was completed for all foster carers, children over 16 and adults over 18 that required renewal by 24 August 2018.

Significant improvements were also required to ensure that all foster carers attended training in Children First 2017. Inspectors found that 79 foster carers out of 209 foster carer households had not completed Children First (2017) training at the time.

In the statement of progress completed for Dublin South East/Wicklow the area judged itself to be substantially compliant against this standard which, following the fieldwork the inspectors did not agree with, as sufficient progress had not been made to increase the compliance rating.

In 2017, the themed inspections had found major non-compliances in the Dublin South Central and the Midlands service areas in relation to this standard. The measures in place to safeguard and protect children in foster care required significant improvement.

The 2017 inspection found that while the Midlands area classified allegations and serious concerns correctly, safety plans were not adequate to ensure the immediate safety of children. Furthermore, the monitoring of safety plans when they were put into place was not adequate. The inspection also found that the system of Garda Síochána (police) vetting in the Midlands service area was ineffective. Inspectors

found five relative foster carers who did not have Garda Síochána (police) vetting and there was no system in place to ensure that adults/persons over the age of 16 living in foster care households were Garda vetted.

In addition, not all foster carers who had children placed with them had received training in Children First (2011) and safe care practices and data provided by the area showed that only 50% of foster carers had completed this training.

The 2018 inspection found that the Midlands service area had made some improvements in relation to safeguarding practices. Safety plans were in place where appropriate and team leaders maintained oversight of safety plans through the supervision process. In addition, the Midlands area had implemented an electronic database to track Garda Síochána (police) vetting and the area had rolled out dates to provide training in Children First (2017).

However, inspectors found that further improvement was required to ensure the system of Garda Síochána (police) vetting was effective. Data provided by the Midlands area showed that six couples, six individual relative foster carers and seven adults and over 16 year olds did not have their Garda Síochána (police) vetting completed. In addition, 161 foster carers out of 216 foster carer households had not completed Children First (2017) at the time of the inspection.

The major non-compliances in the Dublin South Central service area in relation to this standard in 2017 were:

- the measures in place to safeguard and protect children in foster care continued to require significant improvement since the previous inspection in 2016
- the governance arrangement for the oversight of allegations and serious concerns was ineffective
- allegations and serious concerns were not always classified correctly or managed in line with Children First (2011)
- safeguarding practices were not sufficient and safety plans were not always in place to ensure the immediate safety of children
- strategy meetings were not always held in a timely manner
- inspectors found delays and inconsistent practice in the notification of allegations and concerns to the foster care committee
- An Garda Síochána (police) vetting was not in place for all adults and young people over the age of 16 living in foster care households
- there were insufficient safeguarding measures in place for foster carers who had no allocated link social worker
- there was limited training and support afforded to foster carers in relation to Children First (2011) and safe care practices.

In the 2018 follow-up inspection of the Dublin South Central service area inspectors found that insufficient progress had been made in relation to this standard. From a review of six files inspectors found that allegations and serious concerns continued to be categorised incorrectly and therefore did not always receive the appropriate response. In two cases foster carers were not interviewed in relation to the concerns and safety plans were inadequate or did not sufficiently address the risks identified. The area had developed an improved safety plan template but it had not been implemented by the time of the 2018 follow-up inspection.

The Dublin South Central service area used a spread sheet for allegations and serious concerns to facilitate management oversight of these cases. However, similar to the 2017 inspection, the governance and oversight remained ineffective. For example, inspectors found that four foster carers, about whom allegations had been made, did not have an allocated link social worker and/or had inadequate safety plans. Inspectors escalated three of the cases where an allegation had been made against a foster carer who did not have an allocated link social worker and requested assurance from the area manager that allegations against foster carers that did not have an allocated link worker were fully investigated in a timely manner and that adequate safeguarding arrangements were in place. Whilst the area manager responded in writing sufficient assurance was not provided regarding the measures to address the systems that had failed to identify these cases and this was subsequently escalated to the service director.

In addition, in 2018 an audit of open allegations conducted in the area failed to identify that four foster care households were unallocated or that the quality of safety plans was not adequate in all cases. This was brought to the attention of the area manager who responded in writing with a plan to improve the audit process.

The oversight group that had been put in place in the area to oversee the management of allegations and serious concerns had failed to identify that foster carers about whom allegations had been made were unallocated. This issue was also brought to the attention of the service director.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that further improvement was required to ensure that the system for Garda Síochána (police) vetting was effective. The Dublin South Central service area had made some progress in updating Garda Síochána (police) of foster carers. However, the area confirmed that there were nine foster care households where there were persons over 16 residing for whom Garda Síochána (police) vetting had not been completed.

Actions to ensure that all foster carers received training in Children First remained outstanding. Of the 429 foster carers in the Dublin South Central Service area 41 (9.6%) had completed the e-learning module for the Children First (2017). This meant that foster carers may not have had a clear understanding of their role as mandated persons under the legislation.

In the statement of progress completed by the Dublin South Central area the area judged itself to be moderate non-compliant against this standard which, following the fieldwork the inspectors did not agree with as significant issues arose in relation to the management and oversight of allegation against foster carers, and the quality of safety planning, therefore the service area continued to have major non-compliance in relation to this standard.

Regional summary for standard 10

Overall, in 2018 the Dublin Mid Leinster region had made some progress in addressing areas of non-compliance identified in the 2017 inspection, namely the Midlands and the Dublin South East/Wicklow areas had made progress in improving safeguarding practices and their management and oversight of allegations and serious concerns. Both areas had implemented good safety planning practices to ensure that children were protected when allegations had been made.

In Dublin South Central however little progress had been made and the service area had regressed as regards to safeguarding measures. The management of child protection and welfare concerns remained poor and the governance and oversight of the management of allegations and serious concerns was ineffective. The area had difficulty filling vacancies and at the time of this inspection there were six vacancies. As a result the progress in the region was inconsistent across the Dublin Mid Leinster region and further improvement was required to ensure that:

- all allegations were managed in line with Children First
- there was effective governance and management oversight of allegations and serious concerns
- safety plans were implemented and monitored where appropriate
- every area had an effective system of Garda Síochána (police) vetting in place
- that all foster carers had an allocated link social worker
- all foster carers had completed training in Children First (2017).

Inspectors were concerned that the statement of progress in all three service areas identified improvements in compliance with this standard where in fact there had been regression in two areas. In Dublin, South East/Wicklow in 2018 there were 32 young people over 16 and adults over 18 that had not been Garda vetted, which was a new finding. In Dublin South Central the number of foster carers that did not have an allocated link social worker had increased from 56 (24%) to 76 (31%) in 2018. In addition, there were a number of foster carers that had allegations made against them that did not have a link social worker.

The statement of progress completed by the Dublin South East/Wicklow and Midlands service area judged themselves to be substantially compliant against this

standard which inspectors did not agree with. While progress had been made in both areas in relation to monitoring and oversight of allegations, the system of Garda Síochána (police) vetting was not effective. The Dublin South Central service area self-assessed its compliance with Standard 10 to have improved from a major non-compliance to moderate when in fact there were a number of foster carers where allegations had been made that did not have an allocated link worker and the number of unallocated foster carers had increased since the thematic inspection in 2017.

There was no consistent approach to undertaking renewal of Garda Síochána (police) vetting of foster carers or Garda Síochána (police) vetting of adults/persons over 16 that were residing in foster care households in the region and all three service areas required further development to ensure that all foster carers had completed Children First (2017).

The service director who was interviewed as part of the follow-up inspection told inspectors that she had oversight of each area's compliance through reporting metrics and regular management meetings with area managers and principal social workers. The service director told inspectors that she had established a quarterly regional fostering forum to focus on recruitment of foster carers and the standardisation of processes across the region. These meetings were attended by team leaders and principal social workers in fostering and child protection teams from each service area. The service director agreed that Dublin South Central service area had performed poorly in complying with standard 10. She accepted that there may be individual, team and wider systems issues in the Dublin South Central service area and that corrective actions would be required to ensure better governance and oversight in relation to this standard. This included the assignment of an additional principal social worker to the area to drive improvement and provide oversight. In addition, the quality assurance directorate in the Tusla national office would have a role to review how the oversight group in Dublin South Central can be more effective in driving improvements across the service area.

The service director told inspectors that consistency and practice throughout the region was discussed in regional management meetings and learning from area's that had performed poorly in the past was shared across the region.

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

In 2017, the themed inspections found that all three service areas were fully compliant with this standard.

Standard 14b — Assessment and approval of relative foster carers

The 2017 themed inspections had found moderate non-compliance with this standard in the Midlands and Dublin South East/Wicklow service areas. The improvements required in both areas related to ensuring that assessments of relative carers were completed in the required timeframes as set out in National Standards for Foster Care.

In addition the 2017 themed inspection had found there were significant delays in the completion of relative assessments in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area.

The 2018 follow up inspection in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area indicated that the area had made progress. While some assessments were overdue, the reasons provided such as ill health of foster carers or foster children were recorded. Nine relative foster carers who had children placed with them were unapproved but progress had been made. Four of those assessments had been completed, two had commenced and a further three were due to be completed in October. The area manager told inspectors that she had oversight of all on-going assessments and met monthly with the principal social workers to discuss on-going assessments and timeframes to ensure that assessments were completed in a timely manner.

The 2017 themed inspection of the Midlands also found that not all relative foster care assessments were completed in a timely manner. At that time there were 11 relative foster carers undergoing assessments but in three of these the placement of children had occurred in 2016 and the assessments had not been completed in the intervening 12 months since the placement of the children in 2016.

In 2018 the area told inspectors that progress had been made and that all of these assessments had now been completed. Data provided by the area showed that there were 14 relative foster carers undergoing assessments with no relative foster carers on a waiting list for assessment. The area told inspectors that a number of measures were now in place to ensure the timely completion of relative assessments. The measures included the use of a private provider to complete assessments and an improved supervision process to ensure timeframes are met. In addition, managers and the foster care committee monitored and had oversight of assessments to ensure timely completion.

In Dublin South Central the 2017 themed inspection found major non-compliance with this standard. The procedures in place to ensure that emergency placements with relative foster carers were safe and appropriate were not always sufficient. Children remained with foster carers' who had been found unsuitable carers due to

concerns and risks and not all relative foster carer assessments were completed in a timely manner.

In the Dublin South Central service area in 2018, the area's statement of progress deemed their area to be substantially compliant which, following the fieldwork, inspectors did not agree with.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that whilst emergency checks of relative carers were now carried out in a timely manner, the area had introduced additional checks that led to some delays in emergency approval. For example one relative foster carer's approval was delayed by five months due to these additional checks and there was also potential for this to impact on the commencement of assessments.

In addition, thirty relative care assessments were outstanding at the time of the 2017 inspection, some of these dated back to 2016. At the time of the 2018 follow-up fieldwork inspection, the information provided by the area during fieldwork was not sufficiently clear to provide an update on the progress or current status of these outstanding assessments indicating poor governance and oversight of the assessment process of foster carers. Prior to issuing this report the service director provided an update on these outstanding assessments and a further 21 relative assessments had been completed since the follow-up inspection. The service director told inspectors that the outstanding nine assessments had all been allocated and was confident that they would be completed in a timely manner.

Regional Summary Standard 14 (b)

Overall progress had been made in two of the three service areas. The Dublin South East/Wicklow and the Midlands service areas were completing relative foster carer assessments in a timelier manner and the area managers and principal social workers had management oversight of on-going assessments.

However, in Dublin South Central progress made in 2018 in relation to relative assessments was inadequate. At the time of the 2018 follow-up inspection the area had not been able to provide an update on the status of the 30 outstanding relative care assessments from the 2016 and 2017 inspections. There was poor governance and oversight of outstanding assessments of relative foster carers. The service director told inspectors that the level of progress made in the Dublin South Central area was influenced by the lack of staff resources and that this has been escalated to the National Office and posts have been sanctioned and should be filled in the near future. However, the lack of timely action to this major non-compliance, which had previously been escalated, remains a concern.

There was little consistency across the region in the approach to protocols when placing children with relative carers in an emergency, for example there were

different protocols in place for completing emergency checks. The service director told inspectors that she had set up a meeting with the quality assurance directorate in the national office to review the process and the effectiveness of the Dublin South Central governance and oversight group. This review process was successfully implemented in the Midlands service area and had resulted in better performance of governance and oversight in the service area. The governance of the service areas required improvement both at service-area and regional level. Given that resources in the region were outlined by the service director as being limited, more effective use of resources was required so that improved systems and practices put in place in one area were shared and implemented across the region. The individual responses by each area to the same issues, were an ineffective use of resources, and reflect poor overall governance of the areas within the region.

Standard 15 Supervision and support

The 2017 themed foster care inspections found substantial compliance in relation to this standard in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area. The areas for improvement related to unallocated foster carers, support groups for foster carers and an out-of hours service.

In the 2018 follow-up inspection inspectors found that some improvements had been made in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area. There were improvements in the use of formal supervision templates and the area had also reviewed and updated their foster carer panel.

The 2018 follow-up inspection in the Dublin South East/Wicklow area found some improvement in that the number of unallocated foster carers had decreased and there were now three general foster carers and four relative carers that did not have an allocated link social worker.

However, inspectors found that not all allocated and unallocated foster carers had received a link social worker visit in the previous six months, as required by their policy, and in line with regulations. This issue was escalated to the acting area manager at the time who provided a satisfactory written plan to ensure that all foster carers who had not a visit in over six months would receive a supervision visit.

The 2017 themed foster care inspection found moderate non-compliance in relation to this standard in the Midlands service area.

In the 2018 follow-up inspection of the Midlands, inspectors found that progress had been made in relation to the establishment of support groups for foster carers. In addition, data provided by the Midlands service area indicated that all foster carers had received a link social worker visit in the last six months in line with policy. There

were still a small number (seven) households without a link social worker and Tusla had not yet implemented an out-of-hour service for foster carers.

The 2017 themed foster care inspection found major non-compliance in relation to this standard in the Dublin South Central service area. The significant area for improvement related to the high number of foster carers who were not allocated a link social worker, with 56 foster carers without an allocated link social worker at that time. In addition supervision and support visits did not take place in line with the area's policy and inspectors found that visits were not always recorded and when visits were recorded they lacked detail and quality.

In 2018, the area self-assessed their overall compliance at moderate non-compliance which inspectors did not agree with. Data provided for the inspection indicated that there were 76 unallocated foster carers in the area, representing an increase of 20 families since the 2017 inspection.

The majority of foster carers sampled were visited in line with the area's policy which required that no less than two supervision and support visits per year were conducted to foster carers. Of the 13 carers files sampled, 11 (85%) had had at least one visit by a link worker since the last inspection (nine months ago). From the files sampled three of the four unallocated carers (75%) and eight of the nine allocated carers (89%) had had a visit since the last inspection. Three foster carers had had more than one visit since the last inspection. A link worker assigned to cover duty conducted the visits to the unallocated foster carers.

Similar to the last two inspection findings, the provision of support and supervision to foster carers remained inconsistent and the quality of supervision continued to vary. Inspectors reviewed 13 files in relation to the supervision and support provided to foster carers. Of the 13 files sampled, seven had a record of support and supervision completed. Of these seven, three reflected good quality thorough supervision being provided to foster carers.

The service director told inspectors that the fostering team in Dublin South Central were carrying high levels of vacancies and that this has impacted on the performance of the area on an on-going basis. She said that this issue of staffing resources should have been escalated with the area manager using a risk escalation process in order to address this issue with a matter of urgency.

Regional Summary Standard 15

Progress had been made in the Midlands and Dublin South East/Wicklow service areas in relation to supervision and support of foster carers. The two areas were

beginning to formally record support and supervision using a supervision template and there was evidence of good quality supervision and support in the Midlands.

However, In Dublin South Central the quality of supervision and support remained inconsistent since the thematic inspection in 2017. In addition, there had been a further significant increase in the number of foster carers who did not have an allocated link social worker in the area.

Overall, inspectors were concerned that

- there was insufficient progress made in the area since the two previous inspections in addressing the identified deficits within the service,
- the pace of change and progress was not timely and
- the oversight and monitoring systems in place were ineffective.

Following the inspection a meeting was held with the regional service director for the area to discuss

- the consistent non-compliance across the foster care service in the area and the identified risks,
- that the statement of progress did not adequately reflect the situation on the ground and
- the further escalation of the concerning cases and systems issues.

Inspectors also identified that if the area mis-judged its compliance rating, then appropriate actions would not be taken to sufficiently address all the service deficits. The service director acknowledged the deficits in the area which were similar to those following the 2017 inspection and told inspectors that steps were being taken to address them. These steps included additional staff resources and putting oversight and monitoring systems in place to ensure progress towards compliance. She acknowledged that there were issues with individuals, teams and inadequate governance and oversight of systems and poor performance management in the service area. The service director acknowledged that the pace of change in the area was slow but added that once the basics were in place the focus would then shift to service improvement and quality issues. The service director said she had escalated the service area to the national office of Tusla.

At the end of the meeting HIQA requested that the service director provide written assurances in relation to the escalated cases and the systems issues identified in the inspection. A written response was received from the service director which outlined the additional staff resources which were in place since the completion of the inspection. HIQA wrote back to the service director requesting more specific actions to address the service areas issues. The service director has subsequently provided HIQA with an updated plan to address the concerns and service issues and also

conducted a review of four cases that had been escalated following the 2018 inspection.

The lack of an out-of-hours service for foster carers is a national issue being progressed by Tusla and which the national office have indicated will be due for completion by quarter 3 in 2018, subject to successful negotiations with unions.

Standard 16 –Training

The 2017 themed inspections found that the Midlands service area was substantially compliant in relation to this standard. The areas of improvement centred on foster carers not attending training, the lack of analysis of the training needs of foster carers and not all foster carers files had training records on their files. The 2018 follow-up inspection found that this remained the case, and they are were progressing the actions from the 2017 inspection in order to achieve compliance.

The 2017 themed foster care inspections in Dublin South East/Wicklow and Dublin South Central found moderate non-compliance with this standard.

The 2017 thematic inspection found that Dublin South East/Wicklow did not have a training strategy in place and had not completed a comprehensive training needs analysis of foster carers. The area struggled to ensure that foster carers attended on-going training and foster carers training records were not well maintained. In addition, the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area did not have a structured training programme in place for foster carers.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that the area had made significant improvements in relation to training. The area had completed a training needs analysis following the 2017 inspection and had developed a comprehensive training strategy. In addition the area had implemented a structured programme of training for all foster carers covering subjects that were relevant to foster carers. Two administrators maintained a tracking system that recorded invitations sent out to foster carers, responses and training attendance lists.

In the 2017 inspection moderate non-compliance was found in the Dublin South Central service area. Inspectors found there was no overall training strategy in place and comprehensive training needs analysis had not been completed. There were no comprehensive, centralised training records for foster carer's and training records were not well maintained. In addition, the delays in relative care assessments resulted in carers not receiving foundational safe care training despite having children placed with them.

In 2018 there was a plan in place in the area to recruit a social care leader with responsibility for training, developing support groups, preparing a training schedule

and providing some training to foster carers. The area manager told inspectors that the training needs of foster carers had been identified through analysis of the support and supervision template and that some training had been provided in 2018. However a number of foster carers did not have a record of support and supervision and therefore the training needs of all foster carers could not have been included in this analysis.

Regional Summary Standard 16

In the Dublin Mid Leinster region all service areas were working through their action plans to improve their compliance with this standard. Dublin South East/Wicklow had made significant progress in relation to this standard by developing a training strategy, completing a training needs analysis of foster carers and by the introduction of a formal training programme. Dublin South Central had a good programme of training in place for foster carers but did not have an effective training needs analysis. In addition, the three areas struggled to get foster carers to attend on-going training. However, the provision of training and capturing training needs of foster carers in the three service areas was inconsistent and the region did not collaborate or come together to provide joint training to foster carers.

The service director told inspectors that the issue of foster carers not attending training should be addressed through the initial assessment process and through regular support and supervision by link social workers to ensure that foster carers were aware what was expected from them in relation to training attendance. In addition she told inspectors that she would like to develop a regional and more standardised training programme and improve shared learning of what works in the different areas.

Standard 17 – Reviews

In 2017 the thematic foster care inspection found the Midlands service area to be compliant with this standard.

The 2017 themed inspection found major non-compliance in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area as reviews were not carried out in line with regulations and standards. Of the 223 foster carers 188 or 84% had not been reviewed for over three years and some had not been reviewed since their approval as foster carers. An action plan to address this deficit was submitted and HIQA received assurance from the area manager that the area's action plan for the completion of outstanding reviews had commenced and that quarterly progress reports would be provided to HIQA.

In the 2018 follow-up inspection inspectors found that the Dublin South East/Wicklow area had made progress in relation to this standard. Data provided by

the area indicated that the area had completed 65 reviews since April 2017 (18 months since the previous inspection). However, 77 (31%) of foster carers still had not had a review in the last three years. The area manager told inspectors that foster carer reviews had been prioritised based on the criteria identified by the area, for example, where there had been an allegation or serious welfare concern against a foster carer.

Despite this significant backlog of reviews, in 2018, the statement of progress completed by the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area judged its compliance with this standard as being 'moderate non-compliant' which, following the inspection, the inspectors did not agree with; as insufficient progress had been made to increase the compliance rating. The area manager provided inspectors with an updated plan indicating that the outstanding 77 reviews would be completed by April 2019.

The area manager told inspectors that adequate staffing resources were not in place to complete the outstanding reviews as outlined in the 2017 action plan. An additional post of a reviewing officer team leader post was created but could not be filled. As a result, the area had employed a sessional agency worker two days a week to assist with chairing reviews since the inspection in October 2017.

The 2017 themed inspections found major non-compliance in the Dublin South Central service area

The majority of foster carer households (153 of 248) or 62 % did not have an up-to-date review. Inspectors found that:

- reviews were not always carried out when there was an allegation made against the foster carers
- reviews were not comprehensive and were not in line with National Standards
- the foster care committee was not notified of all standard reviews of foster carers in line with Standards
- the foster care committee was not notified of all reviews following a serious welfare concern or allegation
- foster carers did not receive a copy of their review report when it was completed.

As a result the area was judged to be non-compliant major with this standard.

In 2018, the area self-assessed their overall compliance as remaining at major non-compliance which following the fieldwork inspectors agreed with. The area had not progressed the completion of reviews in line with the agreed plan following the 2017 inspection. The plan had been developed in response to an escalation of risk as the majority of foster carers had not had a review to assess their on-going capacity and capability to meet the needs of the children in their care. The area provided a

written plan which set out that they would complete 155 foster care reviews by May 2018. Inspectors found on this inspection that the area had completed 34 reviews since the last inspection in 2017. The significant failure to meet the target that was submitted to HIQA following the 2017 inspection was of concern, and indicates poor governance and oversight of the service.

There were still 157 reviews requiring completion to clear the backlog. The service director told inspectors that a reviewing officer had been appointed on a part-time basis in June 2018. The service area had compiled a schedule of the outstanding reviews. The plan identified that the backlog of foster care reviews would be completed by October 2019 and the service director was confident that this would be achieved. The area manager said that the progress with reviews had been hampered by a lack of sufficient staff resources. However, the reviewing officer had taken up the position in June 2018, and the schedule if fully implemented, would ensure that a further 73 reviews would be completed by year end. The review schedule did not include the reviews that would fall due when foster carers completed one year in fostering. The lack of timely action to address this major non-compliance by the area was a significant concern.

Similar to the previous inspections reviews did not always happen following the closure of an allegation, as outlined in the Tusla policy for the management of serious concerns and allegations. Information provided for the inspection indicated that only one review had been conducted following the closure of an allegation or serious concern.

The service director acknowledged that the area had not made sufficient progress in relation to this standard but was confident that the new plan and the additional team leader post will progress the completion of reviews. In addition, she advised that she would be reviewing the metrics for each area, in order to be informed as regards where she needs to prioritise assigning of resources.

Regional Summary Standard 17

Standard 17 of the National Standards for Foster Care requires that foster carers participate in a review within a year of first placement and thereafter at three yearly intervals. Foster carer reviews refer to the process whereby foster carers, including relative carers, participate in regular reviews of their continuing capacity to provide high quality care and to assist with the identification of gaps/supports in the fostering service. They also provide an opportunity to update health and safety assessments, garda vetting and medicals. In addition, they consider other issues such as supports, training needs and changes in circumstances within the family.

Both areas inspected against this standard had not progressed in the completion of reviews in line with the agreed plans following the 2017 themed inspections. Dublin South East/Wicklow had made some progress and the service area had completed 65 reviews since the last inspection in 2017. The area manager had provided an updated plan whereby the remaining 77 reviews were to be completed by quarter one in 2019. However, the progress was insufficient to support the improved compliance rating suggested by the statement of progress.

Dublin South Central had completed only 34 reviews in the last inspection in 2017 and there were 157 reviews still requiring completion to clear the backlog. The failure to meet the target that was submitted to HIQA following the 2017 inspection was of on-going concern and was considered a significant risk.

The backlog of reviews and the lack of progress was raised in a meeting with the service director following the inspection. The service director told inspectors that a plan had been implemented in the area to complete the outstanding reviews. An additional team leader had been appointed to develop a work plan to complete the outstanding reviews.

A Workforce Planner had been assigned to DML to support workforce planning. Tusla Recruit had increased capacity to fill posts in a more timely manner.

The service director told inspectors that the Midlands area had shared their learning from their own backlog of reviews following the 2017 inspection with the other two service areas at a regional management meeting.

Theme 4: Leadership, Governance and Management

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

Standard 23 – The Foster Care Committee (FCC)

In 2017 the thematic inspection found the Midlands service area to be compliant with this standard.

In 2017 moderate non-compliance with this standard was found in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area. Inspectors found that:

- there was no induction programme or training programme in place for members of the foster care committee
- there was no up-to-date Garda Síochána (police) vetting on file for each of the foster care committee members
- there were no regular reports from the foster care committee to the principal social worker
- there was a lack of clarity in relation to whose responsibility it was to place the names of foster carers on the panel of foster carers
- notifications of allegations, serious or adverse incidents, or breaches of the national Standards, were not always made to the foster care committee in a formal way or in a timely manner
- there was no system in place for tracking the progress of allegations against foster carers
- There was no single, integrated record of the panel of foster carers that contained all the information required by the national policy, procedure and best practice guidance.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that significant improvements had been made in the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area. The chairperson of the foster care committee was clear about her roles and responsibilities and was committed to implementing best practice in line with the Tusla Foster Care Committee Policy Procedures and Best Practice Guidance document to ensure compliance with the standards and policies. An informal training programme of induction for new members had been introduced and formal in-house training for foster care committee members was in the planning stage. All but one committee member were Garda Síochána (police) vetted, but the Garda vetting for this committee member had been applied for. The area had introduced a formal system for monitoring allegations and serious concerns in order to provide oversight. Inspectors reviewed the monitoring and oversight tool and found that all allegations and serious concerns were recorded and followed up by the committee. The chair of the foster care committee told inspectors that when an allegation was received and acknowledged, the committee requested an immediate safety plan and when an outcome report has not been received within three months the committee requested an update.

An annual report for 2017 had been produced and the chair of the foster care committee provided regular reports to the principal social worker. In addition, the chair of the foster care committee met twice a year with the area manager and a quarterly practice development and learning group had been established to discuss and develop improved systems of notifications and communications between the fostering department and the foster care committee.

The area had also implemented an integrated record of the panel of foster carers that contained all the information required by the national policy, procedure and best practice guidance.

However the chair of the foster care committee told inspectors that due to the large volume of reviews presented to the foster care committee, a sub-group was created, consisting of the chair, the co-chair of the committee, a principal social worker and the foster care committee administrator to approve foster care reviews that were not presenting with complex needs, which was not in line with national policy.

In 2017 major non-compliance with this standard was found in the Dublin South central service area. Inspectors found that that:

- the foster care committee did not have sufficient oversight of the foster care service
- the majority of notifications of allegations and serious incidents reviewed were not made to the foster care committee in line with policy
- disruption reports were not notified to the foster care committee
- there was no system in place to track notification of breaches to the foster care committee
- the membership of the committee was not in line with Tusla policy
- there was no induction programme in place or records of training for members of the foster care committee.

The 2018 follow-up inspection found that insufficient progress had been made in relation to this standard.

There was a newly appointed chair of the foster care committee who was due to take up the position following the inspection. She had experience of participating in foster care committees and was clear about her roles and responsibilities. She told the inspector that her intention was to provide independent oversight of the fostering service through monitoring and reporting systems and to integrate quality into practice. While the chair confirmed that the foster care committee was notified of disruptions, families fostering outside their approval status and where the numbers of children placed exceeded the numbers set out in the standards, inspectors did not find this to be the case. Of the six files sampled, inspectors found that only four had been notified to the committee.

Quarterly meetings were taking place to ensure that the foster care committee was notified appropriately of all issues relating to foster carers, yet these systems were ineffective as the foster care committee had not been notified about the foster carers fostering outside of approval status and where the numbers of children exceeded the standards as had been identified in the 2017 inspection. In addition,

similar to the two previous inspections, notifications to the foster committee remained inconsistent following an allegation.

Induction training was planned for the members of the foster care committee and the membership had been reviewed with a view to extending the committee to be in line with the Tusla guidance. A training programme for members of the foster care committee was in the planning stages. The service director told inspectors that the new foster care committee chair that had been appointed to Dublin South Central will initially report directly to the service director due to the level of work as the foster care committee was shared by two service areas. This would ensure that issues can be raised and facilitate independent oversight of the fostering service going forward.

Regional Summary Standard 23

Overall, progress in relation to foster care committees across the region was inconsistent.

Although the 2018 follow-up inspection found that the Dublin South East/Wicklow service area had made significant improvements in relation to this standard, the progress in the Dublin South Central service area had been insufficient. Further development was required to ensure that all the foster care committees in the region functioned in a standardised manner and fulfil all their functions under the standards and in compliance with the Tusla national policy procedure and best practise guidelines.

Theme 5: Use of Resources

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

Standard 21 — Retention and recruitment of foster carers

In 2017, the themed inspection found moderate non-compliance against this standard in the Dublin South East/Wicklow area. There was no overall recruitment or retention strategy in place and there was an insufficient number and range of foster carers in place to meet the demands of the service. In addition, the panel of foster carers required regular review to ensure there was an appropriate range of foster carers available.

In 2018 the Dublin South East/Wicklow area statement of progress indicated that the area had implemented a recruitment and retention strategy. The area had completed a comprehensive recruitment campaign in liaison with the regional

assessment fostering team (RAFT) and a regional recruitment forum led by the service director had been established to develop a regional recruitment strategy to recruit more foster carers. The principal social workers told inspectors that the service director was planning to evaluate the outcomes of the regional recruitment drive and was considering recruiting a professional fostering development officer to enhance the recruitment process to meet the needs of the children in the area.

The 2017 themed inspection programme found major non-compliance in the Midlands and Dublin South Central service areas.

In the Midlands in 2017 improvements were required to ensure there was a sufficient number of foster carer in the area to meet the needs of the children in care. Inspectors found that 57 children had been placed outside the service area.

In 2018 the Midlands area statement of progress judged itself to be non-compliant moderate against this standard which following the inspection, inspectors did not agree with. While the area had approved 17 new foster carers since the last inspection, eight foster carers had left the service. In addition the number of children in care placed outside the area had risen from 57 to 69. Although the area told inspectors that many of the children in care placed outside the area were located in neighbouring counties.

In 2017 inspectors found that the Dublin South Central service area required significant improvement in relation to this standard. The recruitment and retention strategy in place was not effective and 26 foster care households were providing placements outside their approval status. In addition, the number of unrelated children living in seven foster care households exceeded the maximum number set by the national standards and exit interviews with foster carers who had left the service to inform future learning were not being conducted.

In 2018, the Dublin South Central follow-up inspection found that the governance and oversight of this standard was insufficient. The 2018 statement of progress did not include an update on the 26 foster care households which were providing placements outside their approval or on the seven families where the number of unrelated children exceeded the maximum set by the National Standards.

The 2017 action plan outlined that a review of the 26 foster care households where the number of children exceeded the standards was to be undertaken by the end of June 2018 but this action had not been completed. The area manager told inspectors that a detailed report on these foster carers was to be prepared for the September foster care committee meeting.

In relation to the seven foster carers where the number of children placed exceeded the standards the area manager provided an update following the inspection and three foster placements were still in breach of the standards. The area's statement of progress identified that the areas compliance rating had improved from non-

compliance major to moderate which following the inspection, inspectors did not agree with.

The area had conducted seven exit interviews with foster carers that had left the service and a report was prepared in July 2018. It was too early in the process to identify how the analysis of these exit interviews would affect the recruitment and retention strategy.

Regional Summary Standard 21

The recruitment of foster carers was identified as an on-going concern for all service areas in the Dublin Mid Leinster region. Recruitment campaigns, recruitment strategies and regional recruitment forums in the region had not brought about a significant change to ensure that there was an appropriate number and range of foster carers indicating that all three areas still had a considerable amount of work to undertake for this to be achieved. In addition, the Midlands service area placed a significant number of children outside their service area while the Dublin South Central area had 26 foster carer households that were providing placements outside approval status and three foster carers where the number of unrelated children still exceeded the number set by National standards.

The service director told inspectors that a regional recruitment campaign was held in March 2018 including a leaflet drop and radio interviews. She said that the head of the communications department in Tusla has been liaising with the region to get a UK marketing company involved nationally for recruitment campaigns of foster carers. In addition, the region had proposed to have a full time development officer in place pending on funding approval to focus on the recruitment of foster carers in the region.

Midlands only

As outlined at the start of this report, two additional standards were included in the 2017 thematic foster care inspection in the Midlands area, due to non-compliances found in the previous inspection of the area. This section outlines the findings in relation to these standards from the 2018 follow-up inspection.

Standard 7: Care planning and review

Each child and young person in foster care has a written care plan. The child or young person and his or her family participate in the preparation of the care plan.

On the last inspection in September 2017, inspectors found the area to be substantially compliant with this standard, findings included:

- Not all children in care had an up-to-date care plan.
- Some care plans did not include the views of children, some were not signed and the dates of some care plans was not easily identifiable.
- Some placement plans were not completed in full.
- Not all children who required them had absence management plans.

Against Standard 7, in 2018 the area self-assessed their overall compliance as substantially compliant, indicating that the compliance rating had remained the same. Following the desktop review, inspectors agreed with this compliance rating.

Data provided by the area showed that, of 366 children in care, 358 (98%) of children had an up-to-date care plan. Reviews had been scheduled for the remaining children but these had to be deferred for legitimate reasons.

The area indicated that children are encouraged to attend their reviews, that social workers ensure that the care plans include the views of the children and that this is overseen by the team leaders. The child in care reviewing officers ensure that the views of children are clearly recorded in the minutes of reviews and that these are incorporated into the updated care plans. A protocol is in place to ensure that, if a review is deferred or cancelled on two occasions, the reviewing officer notifies the PSW and re-schedules the review as soon as possible.

The area indicated that placement plans were not being consistently completed and updated but that action had been taken to address this. The PSW advised social workers of the results of 2017 file audits and issued guidance to social workers on placement plans and their content. She also advised that dedicated time would be provided for the completion of these plans and that they were to be disseminated to relevant persons and copies placed on files by the end of March 2018.

The area indicated that 2017 file audits showed that findings regarding absence management plans were similar to those regarding placement plans. The area identified both as priority areas for updating and, in the self-assessment, indicated that absence management plans had been updated for all children. They also expressed their intention to develop a system to link reviews of placement plans and absence management plans to the child in care review process by September/October 2018.

Standard 8: Matching carers with children and young people

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

At the time of the previous inspection in 2017, inspectors found that the matching process was not effective and moderate non-compliance was found under this standard. Insufficient placement options, coupled with a lack of assessments of need, meant that children were not always matched with carers who could meet their needs. Inspectors found a number of cases where poor matching had resulted in placement breakdowns. Link social workers told inspectors that they had no tool available to them which helped them to assess potential placements and consider the risks therein.

In October 2016, the area placed the issue of matching on their risk register due to the risk that children in care may not be matched to suitable foster carers due to limited placement options. While the area had implemented a number of improvements in the area by the time of the 2017 inspection, inspectors found that there continued to be insufficient placement options in the area and a heavy reliance on private placements located outside the geographical area. This meant that a large number of children, 57 at the time of the 2017 inspection, were placed outside the area and may not have their assessed needs met as a result.

In 2018, against Standard 8, the area self-assessed their overall compliance as non-compliant moderate, indicating that the compliance rating had remained the same. Following the inspection, inspectors agreed with this compliance rating.

While the area indicated that progress had been made to strengthen the regional recruitment team by the addition of two members of staff, the capacity of the area to offer placements for children in their own area had not improved since the 2017 inspection. Data provided by the area in 2018 showed that the number of children in care placed outside the area had further increased from 57 children to 69 children in that time. The area manager pointed out that many of these placements were in a neighbouring county.

The placement request form was amended to include a matching component in order to further assist with matching the potential carers to the child's presenting needs. The PSW told inspectors that, on occasions when the placement request is incomplete, it is returned by the lead social work team leader for completion in full. The use of the new placement request form is monitored by the PSW through regular file audits.

Conclusion

The progress made in the Dublin Mid Leinster region was mixed and inconsistent. Since the last thematic inspections in 2017 the Midlands and Dublin South East/Wicklow service areas had made significant progress on specific issues. For example, the Midlands service area had implemented oversight of safety plans and the cases that had safety plans in place were heard at the foster care committee for independent oversight. Dublin South East/Wicklow had implemented a plan to address a significant back log of foster carer's reviews. In addition, both service areas had good oversight and monitoring systems in place to manage allegations and serious concerns.

In contrast, the Dublin South Central service area had deteriorated further in standards with major non-compliances, namely safeguarding, support and supervision and relative foster carer assessments. The service area had not adequately addressed the identified deficits following the last two inspections and as a result HIQA met with the service director shortly after the follow-up inspection to discuss the on-going major non-compliances across the Dublin South Central foster care service and the identified risks. In addition, the statement of progress provided by the area did not adequately reflect the situation on the ground and inspectors were concerned that given the area's failure to identify these significant risks, such as the high number of unallocated foster carers, that they would not take appropriate timely action to address the service's deficits.

The service director acknowledged the deficits in the Dublin South Central service area, and agreed that the pace of progress was slow and that management oversight and monitoring systems were inadequate. She provided a written plan to address staff recruitment issues through a national working group relating to staff retention and said that she had escalated the service area to the national office of Tusla. In addition the service director highlighted that there had been progress made in the area relating to a number of actions to ensure greater compliance with fostering standards which included:

- the setting up of a third fostering team for which a social work team leader was now in place, which will increase the capacity of service relating to governance and management of service
- improved systems relating to Garda Síochána (police) vetting
- appointment of a designated social work team leader for foster care reviews
- on-going work in relation to the culture of the area and to ensure improved work practice.

However, inspectors found there was a lack of a consistent approach across the region to address non-compliances found in the 2017 thematic inspections. For example despite significant resource deficits each area had set up their own Garda Síochána (police) vetting system. All three areas did not have an effective system in place to ensure that persons/adults over 16 were Garda vetted. All three service

areas had implemented different systems to ensure that foster carers attend Children First (2017) training; however in all three areas a significant number of foster carers had not attended Children First (2017) training, indicating that the different systems were not effective and showed ineffective governance.

Inspectors found that all area managers judged their levels of compliance as having sufficiently improved in their statement of progress. For example Dublin South East/Wicklow had judged themselves as substantially compliant in safeguarding and child protection when insufficient progress had been made to ensure that persons/adults over 16 had been Garda vetted and that all foster carers had attended Children First (2017) training. The Midlands service area also judged themselves as substantially compliant against this standard despite Garda Síochána (police) vetting not having been completed for adults/persons over 16 and the majority of foster carers not having attended Children First (2017) training.

The service director who was interviewed as part of the follow-up inspections had a good understanding of the areas that required improvements and had implemented a number of actions to develop a regional approach to standardise processes including Garda Síochána (police) vetting, Children First (2017) training, recruitment and retention of foster carers and to ensure that sufficient staffing resources were in place in the future to manage reviews, assessments and supervision and support for foster carers.

In addition, learning from areas that had successfully improved their compliance, for example the improvements made in the Midlands in relation to foster care reviews, had been shared with other areas within the region, which is good practice. However, this was not consistently done, in any comprehensive way, and it had not led to improvement in the completion of reviews in the Dublin South Central area for example.

HIQA will continue to monitor compliance in the Dublin Mid Leinster region through each areas action plan and in particular will seek updates in relation to the areas of non-compliances in the Dublin South Central service area.

Appendix 1 – Standards and regulations for statutory foster care services

<i>National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)</i>
Theme 1: Child-centred Services
<p>Standard 1: Positive sense of identity Children and young people are provided with foster care services that promote positive sense of identity for them.</p>
<p>Standard 2: Family and friends Children and young people in foster care are encouraged and facilitated to maintain and develop family relationships and friendships.</p>
<p>Standard 3: Children’s Rights Children and young people are treated with dignity, their privacy is respected, they make choices based on information provided to them in an age-appropriate manner, and have their views, including complaints, heard when decisions are made which affect them or the care they receive.</p>
<p>Standard 4: Valuing diversity Children and young people are provided with foster care services that take account of their age, stage of development, individual assessed needs, illness or disability, gender, family background, culture and ethnicity (including membership of the Traveller community), religion and sexual identity.</p> <p><i>Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995</i> <i>Part III Article 8 Religion</i></p>
<p>Standard 25: Representations and complaints Health boards[¥] have policies and procedures designed to ensure that children and young people, their families, foster carers and others with a bona fide interest in their welfare can make effective representations, including complaints, about any aspect of the fostering service, whether provided directly by a health board or by a non-statutory agency.</p>

[¥]Where reference is made to Health Boards these services are now provided by the Child and Family Agency.

National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)

Theme 2: Safe and Effective Services

Standard 5: The child and family social worker

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

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

Standard 6: Assessment of children and young people

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

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

Standard 7: Care planning and review

Each child and young person in foster care has a written care plan. The child or young person and his or her family participate in the preparation of the care plan.

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

Standard 8: Matching carers with children and young people

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

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

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

National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)

Standard 9: A safe and positive environment

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

Standard 10: Safeguarding and child protection

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

Standard 13: Preparation for leaving care and adult life

Children and young people in foster care are helped to develop the skills, knowledge and competence necessary for adult living. They are given support and guidance to help them attain independence on leaving care.

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

Foster care applicants participate in a comprehensive assessment of their ability to carry out the fostering task and are formally approved by the health board³ prior to any child or young person being placed with them.

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

Part III, Article 5 Assessment of foster parents

Part III, Article 9 Contract

14b. Assessment and approval of relative foster carers

Relatives who apply, or are requested to apply, to care for a child or young person under Section 36 (1)(d) of the Child Care Act, 1991 participate in a comprehensive assessment of their ability to care for the child or young person and are formally approved by the health board.

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

Part III, Article 5 Assessment of relatives

Part III, Article 9 Contract

³Formally health boards at the time of writing the Standards, now The Child and Family Agency (Tusla).

National Standards for Foster Care (April 2003)

Standard 15: Supervision and support

Approved foster carers are supervised by a professionally qualified social worker. This person, known as the link worker, ensures that foster carers have access to the information, advice and professional support necessary to enable them to provide high-quality care.

Standard 16: Training

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

Standard 17: Reviews of foster carers

Foster carers participate in regular reviews of their continuing capacity to provide high quality care and to assist with the identification of gaps in the fostering service.

Standard 22: Special Foster care

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

Theme 3: Health and Development

Standard 11: Health and development

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

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

Part III, Article 6 Assessment of circumstances of child

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

Standard 12: Education

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

Theme 4: Leadership, Governance and Management

Standard 18: Effective policies

Health boards have up-to-date effective policies and plans in place to promote the provision of high quality foster care for children and young people who require it.

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

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

Standard 19: Management and monitoring of foster care agency

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

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

Part IV, Article 12 Maintenance of register

Part IV, Article 17 Supervision and visiting of children

Standard 23: The Foster Care Committee

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

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

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

Standard 24: Placement of children through non-statutory agencies

Health boards placing children or young people with a foster carer through anon-statutory agency are responsible for satisfying themselves that the statutory requirements are met and that the children or young people receive a high quality service.

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

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

Health boards are actively involved in recruiting and retaining an appropriate range of foster carers to meet the diverse needs of the children and young people in their care.

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

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