



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Health Information and Quality Authority Regulation Directorate monitoring inspection of Non-Statutory Foster Care Services

Name of service provider:	Origins Foster Care Service
Type of inspection:	Focused
Date of inspection:	03-05 March 2026
Lead inspector:	Catherine Linehan
Support inspector(s):	Grace Lynam Nicola Rossiter Hazel Hanrahan
Fieldwork ID	MON-0049428

Safeguarding

This inspection is focused on the safeguarding of children and young people placed in foster care through non-statutory foster care services.

Safeguarding is one of the most important responsibilities of a provider. It has a dual function, to protect children from harm and promote their welfare. Safeguarding is more than just the prevention of abuse, exploitation and neglect. It is about being proactive, recognising safeguarding concerns, reporting these when required to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and other relevant authorities and also 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.

About this inspection

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 national 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 continuous improvement so that children have access to better, and safer services.

HIQA is authorised by the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality 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)¹, including non-statutory providers of foster care, and to report on its findings to the Minister.

HIQA monitors the performance of the Child and Family Agency against the *National Standards for Foster Care* (2003) and advises the Minister and the Child and Family Agency.

This inspection was a monitoring inspection of Origins Foster Care to monitor compliance with the National Standards for Foster Care, with a focus on the

¹ Tusla was established on 1 January 2014 under the *Child and Family Agency Act 2013*.

safeguarding of children in foster care. The scope of the inspection included standards 9, 10, 14, 17 and 19 of the *Nationals Standards for Foster Care* (2003).

How we inspect

As part of this inspection, inspectors met with the relevant professionals involved with Origins Foster Care and with foster carers. Inspectors observed practices and reviewed documentation such as foster carers' files, children's files and relevant documentation relating to the areas covered by the specific standards against which the service provider was inspected.

The key activities of this inspection involved:

- the analysis of data submitted by the service provider
- interviews with:
 - the chief executive officer (CEO) of the agency who is also the designated liaison person and the principal social worker
 - the director
- focus groups with:
 - two social work team leaders
 - four link workers
 - six foster carers
- observation of:
 - complex case meeting
- the review of:
 - policies and procedures, minutes of various meetings, audits, trackers and service plans
 - a sample of 23 foster carer files
 - A sample of five staff supervision files
- conversations or visits with:
 - six children
 - six foster carers
 - two child in care social workers
 - one guardian ad litem

Acknowledgements

HIQA wishes to thank children and foster carers that spoke with inspectors during the course of this inspection in addition to staff and managers of the service for their cooperation.

Profile of the Foster Care service

The information in this section of the report was provided by the service for inclusion in the report.

Origins Foster Care, established in 2018, is a dedicated, independent fostering agency providing high-quality, child-centred foster care services. The service offers a comprehensive range of placement options, including respite, short-term, medium-term, and long-term care. Origins' mission is to deliver a professional and responsive fostering service tailored to meet the individual and diverse needs of each child placed in care. The provider works in close partnership with Tusla, foster carers and statutory services to ensure children experience stability, safety, and the opportunity to thrive in nurturing home environments.

Origins Foster Care is led by a chief executive officer (CEO), who also fulfils the role of principal social worker and is one of the company's owners. This dual role ensures strong professional leadership, robust governance, and clear accountability across all aspects of the service.

Oversight is provided by co-owner and director with the support of an advisory board which supports strategic direction, governance, and quality assurance within the organisation.

The fostering service is supported by two social work team leaders who oversee the delivery of fostering services and provide supervision and guidance to five senior practitioner fostering link workers and one pathway to senior practitioner fostering link worker. In addition, there is a dedicated social work team leader responsible for the oversight of fostering assessments and coordinating and managing a panel of sessional social workers who undertake comprehensive assessments of prospective foster carers.

To strengthen recruitment and public engagement, the provider also employs a recruitment and marketing coordinator with fostering experience, supported by a

marketing consultant, ensuring a proactive and strategic approach to foster carer recruitment and retention.

The provider employs a business development manager with oversight of seven administrative support staff members who provide essential business, administration, and accounts support. Origins also contracts a compliance consultant and two external social work supervisors. The compliance consultant conducts audits on specific areas of practice every three months, ensuring that standards are consistently met. The external supervisors support the directors in relation to professional practice and the development of the model of practice across the service.

All placements are made and supervised in accordance with the *National Standards for Foster Care* (2003) and the Child Care Regulations (1995). Origins foster families are supported with their own link worker, a dedicated administrator and receive invitations to two trainings monthly and are provided with individualised training and therapeutic supports as required. There is a 24/7 out of hours support service available to all foster carers.

Foster families are invited to numerous family days throughout the year and a foster carer appreciation day takes place on a yearly basis. Foster families are invited to participate in information sessions, engage with prospective foster carers who wish to speak with an existing foster carer and some of Origins Foster Carers have been guests on podcasts.

The following support are offered to foster carers:

- induction training
- ongoing monthly training calendar
- tailored therapeutic support packages
- allocated Link Social Worker
- out-of-hours on-call support
- membership of an advocacy service
- foster carer handbook and full policy access support groups

Data provided by Origins Foster Care prior to the inspection showed that the service had 46 foster care households and, at the time of inspection, they provided foster care placements for 62 children. These foster care households were located in various geographical areas in Ireland.

Placements with Origins Foster Care are commissioned by Tusla service area teams. Tusla retain their statutory responsibilities to children placed with this service and approve the foster carers through their foster care committees. The foster care service is required to adhere to relevant standards and regulations when providing

a service on behalf of Tusla. Both services are accountable for the care and wellbeing of children.

Private foster care services are monitored by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Origins Foster Care was last audited by the Tusla Alternative Care Inspection and Monitoring Service (ACIMS) in January 2024. Monitors reviewed standard 17 and found that Origins foster care demonstrated strong management and governance arrangements were strong. Monitors identified that Origins Foster Care had effective systems to plan and oversee foster care reviews and that they were completed in line with the organisations policies and procedures and were aligned to the *National Standards for Foster Care* (2003).

Compliance classifications

HIQA will judge the service to be **compliant, substantially compliant or not-compliant** with the standards. These are defined as follows:

Compliant: A judgment of compliant means the service is meeting or exceeding the standard and is delivering a high-quality service which is responsive to the needs of children.

Substantially compliant: A judgment of substantially compliant means the service is mostly compliant with the standard but some additional action is required to be fully compliant. However, the service is one that protects children.

Not compliant: A judgment of not compliant means the service has not complied with a standard and that considerable action is required to come into compliance. Continued non-compliance or where the non-compliance poses a significant risk to the safety, health and welfare of children using the service will be risk-rated red (high risk) and the inspector will identify the date by which the provider must comply. Where the non-compliance does not pose a significant risk to the safety, health and welfare of children using the service, it is risk-rated orange (moderate risk) and the provider must take action within a reasonable time frame to come into compliance.

This inspection report sets out the findings of a monitoring inspection against the following standards:

National Standards for Foster Care		Judgment
Standard 9	A safe and positive environment	Compliant
Standard 10	Safeguarding and child protection	Compliant
Standard 14	(a) Assessment and approval of non-relative foster carers	Compliant
Standard 17	Reviews of foster carers	Compliant
Standard 19	Management and monitoring of foster care services	Compliant

This inspection was carried out during the following times:

Date	Times of inspection	Inspector name	Role
03 March 2026	09:00hrs to 17:00hrs 10:30hrs to 17:00hrs 10:30hrs to 17:00hrs 09:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Catherine Linehan Grace Lynam Hazel Hanrahan Nicola Rossiter	Lead Inspector Support Inspector Support Inspector Support Inspector
04 March 2026	09:00hrs to 17:00hrs 09:00hrs to 17:00hrs 09:00hrs to 17:00hrs 09:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Catherine Linehan Grace Lynam Hazel Hanrahan Nicola Rossiter	Lead Inspector Support Inspector Support Inspector Support Inspector
05 March 2026	09:00hrs to 17:00hrs 09:00hrs to 15:00hrs 09:00hrs to 15:00hrs 09:00hrs to 17:00hrs	Catherine Linehan Grace Lynam Hazel Hanrahan Nicola Rossiter	Lead Inspector Support Inspector Support Inspector Support Inspector
06 March 2026	11:00hrs to 12:30hrs 11:00hrs to 13:00hrs	Hazel Hanrahan Nicola Rossiter	Support Inspector Support Inspector

Children's experience of the service

Children's experiences were established through visiting and talking with six children in foster care and twelve foster carers. Inspectors also spoke with four link workers and two social work team leaders. A review of 23 foster carer's files, five supervision files, and other documents including trackers and governance documents, all provided evidence about the experience of children placed with Origins Foster Care.

The inspection found that children were treated with dignity and respect and their rights were promoted. Children observed by inspectors in the home appeared relaxed and well cared for by the foster carers. Children told inspectors that they felt listened to and said that they loved how Origins Foster Care sent gifts and treats at special times of the year, such as cookie making kits or seasonal decorations. One child described the link worker supporting her foster carers as the "best social worker...".

Origins Foster Care had a child participation strategy in place and this emphasised a strong importance being placed on hearing the voices of children and children were actively involved in decisions about their care. Children told inspectors when speaking about their experience of Origins Foster Care, that they felt heard, and one child told inspectors "people listen to me". Origins Foster Care carried out individualised participation plans in annual consultation with children. This gave children the opportunity to express their preferences regarding their care, their education and their daily routines. This consultation also extended to the birth children of foster carers which ensured that the voices of all household members were heard. Origins Foster Care aimed to consider the well-being of all in the home, ensuring all members felt valued. Foster carers spoke to inspectors about Origins caring about the welfare of their own children. Promoting a child-centred approach enhances safety and accountability and Origins Foster Care aimed to ensure the voices of all children were captured. Origins Foster Care promoted foster carer's awareness of their responsibility to inform children in their care that their information was recorded on file and they could request access to their files. Origins Foster Care emphasised the importance of promoting children's sense of respect and that children's rights were protected and this was evident throughout the inspection.

This inspection found that foster carers, their families and the children placed in their care, felt valued, respected, and well supported by Origins Foster Care. Foster carers spoke very positively about their experiences of the service and described feeling appreciated in their role. Foster carers told inspectors that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) maintains contact with them and they noted that this enhances their feelings of 'being valued'. Foster carers described feeling well supported and highlighted the quality of training provided, the responsiveness and availability of link workers and the strong sense of support offered by their link workers and the wider service. Foster carers benefitted from having an assigned administrator to assist them with their documentation for reviews and this support allowed an additional positive relationship of support to be built. Foster carers emphasised that the service is child centred, with a clear focus on prioritising the needs, wellbeing and voices of the children in their care. Origins Foster Care was described by one foster carer as "absolutely amazing" and this sentiment was echoed throughout inspector's engagement with foster carers;

- "we can contact someone anytime"
- "our (birth) children are prioritised by Origins"
- "they care about our own (birth) daughter, they care about her welfare, it's important to them"

Referring to their link worker, one foster carer commented, "she is like part of the family" and "the kids love her".

The inspection found that Origins Foster Care was committed to supporting foster carers and children in their care to be part of the wider foster care community. Foster carers described the service as warm, personable and supportive, noting that staff were attentive to their individual needs and that foster carers had developed positive relationships with their link workers. Foster carers told inspectors that Origins Foster Care demonstrated appreciation for their role by acknowledging important times of the year and making efforts to show that they were valued through events such as 'Appreciation Day'. Foster carers also highlighted the thoughtful gestures made towards children such as providing gifts and tokens at times like Halloween, Christmas and Easter. Foster carers told inspectors that Origins Foster Care prioritised the needs of children in care and also the foster carer's own children because 'they care what they think' and 'ask how they are' and they demonstrate a knowledge and interest in biological children as well as children in foster care, embracing the whole family as part of the foster care experience. Foster carers told inspectors about the online support groups they can avail of, as well as meet ups with other foster carers, summer events and coffee mornings; all which lead to a sense of feeling a part of a wider fostering community. Foster carers also spoke of being involved with an advocacy service for supporting all foster carers. Their involvement with this service, highlighted for foster carers the quality of support they receive from Origins Foster Care.

Foster carers spoken to described the organisation as "efficient". They commended the organisation for its adaptiveness and also stated that they were "organised".

Foster carers also said Origins Foster Care was;

- "respectful of our opinions"
- "no matter what you ask, you feel cared for"

Professionals spoken to by inspectors commended Origins Foster Care service on their excellent communication and the firm relationships which link workers build with carers and the children. One professional commenting "she knows them like her own family".

Summary of inspection findings

Placements with Origins Foster Care are commissioned by Tusla service area teams. Tusla retain their statutory responsibilities to children placed with this service and approve the foster carers through their foster care committees². Origins Foster Care is required to adhere to relevant standards and regulations when providing a service on behalf of Tusla. Both services are accountable for the care, wellbeing and safeguarding of children.

Children in foster care require a high-quality service which is safe and well supported by Tusla social workers. Foster carers must be able to provide children with warm and nurturing relationships in order for them to achieve positive outcomes. The service provider must be well governed in order to produce these outcomes consistently.

This report reflects the findings of this focused inspection, which looked at how the provider ensured that foster carers provided a stable, nurturing and secure home environment where the child's safety and wellbeing are consistently prioritised. The inspection also looked at whether assessments of foster carers were timely and comprehensive and whether foster placements were regularly monitored and formally reviewed to ensure they continue to meet the child's needs, remain safe and appropriate and that any required supports or changes are identified and acted upon. In addition, the inspection looked at the governance and management structures in place to support the delivery of a consistently high quality, safe foster care service.

In this inspection, HIQA found that, of the five national standards assessed:

- Five standards were compliant

The findings of this inspection demonstrated a well governed and effectively managed foster care service, with strong systems in place to support foster carers, safeguard children and promote positive outcomes. Origins Foster Care provided a high level of support to foster carers and foster carers reported feeling well supported and valued by their link workers and also described good access to training, guidance and supervision. The service demonstrated a clear commitment to valuing foster carers and recognising their central role in achieving positive outcomes for children. Foster carers spoke about this feeling of being valued by Origins Foster Care and it was very important to them in the support provided by the service. The important role foster carers played in the lives of children in care

² A foster care committee is a prescribed group that meets to make recommendations regarding foster care applications and to approve long-term placements.

was recognised by Origins Foster Care and foster carers valued this acknowledgment.

Safeguarding was prioritised within the service and it was embedded across all aspects of Origin Foster Care structures. A strong safeguarding culture was evident with safeguarding being considered at every juncture. Robust risk management systems were in place, with clear procedures for identifying, assessing and managing risks through safeguarding decision making discussions. Safeguarding was supported by effective monitoring systems and oversight.

Fostering assessment reports completed were comprehensive, informed and provided clear rationale to the foster care committee for their consideration of approval of applicants. Foster carers spoke of the assessment process positively, which demonstrates a skilled work force who can undertake such an in-depth assessment in a manner which is non-intrusive and in fact can be described in a positive way by those being assessed.

There was clear evidence that reviews were carried out in line with statutory requirements and Origins Foster Care had administrative support available to families to assist them in the completion of the paper work required to support the review process.

Origins Foster Care demonstrated strong leadership, governance and oversight arrangements. Origins Foster Care had effective systems in place to monitor the quality and safety of the service through audits, regular supervision and strong tracking systems. There was evidence of continuous review and reflection and a commitment to service quality and improvement with discussions held regularly on whether improvements were required in any areas.

The inspection found that there was regular consultation with birth children of foster carers, ensuring they were part of the assessment and were kept informed at every stage regarding the fostering assessment process. They continued to be consulted after foster children were placed in their home, recognising the impact fostering can have on the wider family and helping to sustain placement stability and ensuring all children feel heard, respected and valued.

The use of support carers and back up carers was also noted by inspectors as being good practice in respect of ways in which foster carers are supported in, what can be, a difficult role. These support carers completed mandatory background checks and safety assessments and they had access to training, and 24/7 telephone support and guidance. The maintenance of clear communication and detailed records was an expectation placed on support carers to ensure

consistent high-quality care, even when primary foster parents were temporarily unavailable.

Based on what inspectors were told, observed and reviewed, the service provided to children by Origins Foster Care was safe and of a good quality.

Standard 9: A safe and positive environment

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

The inspection found that foster carers are dedicated to providing a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment where children are cared for with affection and feel valued, accepted and supported. Foster carers provided stimulating environments full of opportunities for play and learning. Foster carers were guided in their role through regular home visits, which were both announced and unannounced, as well as open communication with their allocated link worker. This support enabled foster carers to care for children effectively and promote the care, development and well-being of the children in their care. Inspectors reviewed evidence on file of the care, love and commitment demonstrated by foster carers to the children in their care. This was also observed during home visits. Foster carers were noted to ensure specific foods and clothes are available to children, some children who could be very explicit about such needs.

The inspection found that from a sample of files reviewed all had care plans which were shared with foster carers and the particular needs of children were considered and responded to, for example, remaining in the same school despite placement changes. The foster carers described working in collaboration with link workers to ensure children's needs were met. Children were provided with therapeutic support to address some behaviours and additional family supports were made available to the whole family when needed.

The inspection found that foster carers provided for everyday essentials, including adequate, well-maintained clothing and a nutritious, varied diet as observed on visits to foster carer's homes. Care plans also noted the wishes of birth parents and the follow through on those wishes, for example, a parent wishing for their child to be raised in a particular religious belief system and this being respected and followed through by the foster carers. The child's social workers acknowledged the great progress children have made in the foster carer's homes and this acknowledgement reflected the work of the foster carer and link worker combined in ensuring the needs of children were met.

Regular home visits and supervision provided professional guidance to foster carers, helping them respond appropriately to the child's emotional, behavioural and developmental needs. Inspectors also noted regular phone contact between foster carers and link workers, all which provided consistent support, guidance and

reassurance to carers in their day-to-day role. Consistent and regular contact helps foster carers to raise concerns early, reflect on the needs of the child and feel confident that they are not managing challenges alone. This regular communication also strengthened oversight of the placement and helped to ensure that children received safe, stable and well supported care. This regular communication provided an excellent level of safeguarding to children in placement and ensured any concerns were communicated and dealt with in a timely manner.

The service recognised the importance of supporting not only foster carers but also their biological children, who share their home with children in foster care. Inspectors were informed that their children were given opportunities to speak with link workers about their experience of fostering, providing them with a safe space to express their views, ask questions and discuss any challenges they may encounter. Such engagement helped ensure that the fostering arrangement was positive for all members of the household and that the voices of all family members were acknowledged and considered within the overall support provided to the foster carers. Foster carers told inspectors how children were prioritised by Origins Foster Care and they considered this a very important part in the support offered to them as a family. Link workers offered specific support to birth children struggling with the foster care experience and this individualised support offered to children was noted by inspectors as tailored and child focused.

Health and safety assessments were completed on an annual basis to ensure that the foster home environment remained safe and appropriate for the children placed there, including safe vehicles with up-to-date proof of safety documentation as well as pet questionnaires. Foster carers were expected to maintain a home that was free of avoidable hazards, ensuring that the living space was safe and clean and that it appropriately reflected the child's individual need for privacy and space. Additional levels of safety and monitoring were required in some homes where children lacked awareness of on-line safety or knowledge of safety risks and it was noted how foster carers adapted to these additional needs as opposed to expecting the child in their care to change to suit their home. Inspectors observed family pictures in the home, embracing the foster child's family into their foster home. Origin Foster Care link workers conducted unannounced home visits incorporating health and safety checks, ensuring the home continued to meet the safety requirements expected at assessment stage.

The inspection found that foster carers were promoting the wellbeing of children in their care, in particular, children with complex needs and disabilities. Foster carers who sought additional supports from Tusla on behalf of the children in their care were supported by their link workers in making requests and link workers advocated on their behalf for resources required to meet the additional needs of some children, for example, assisted technology or therapeutic interventions. Such

advocacy reflected foster carer's commitment to ensuring children in their care received timely and appropriate support and that decisions regarding the child's care could be progressed in the child's best interests.

Link workers were described by foster carers as supportive and responsive, working alongside foster carers and assisting them in their efforts to seek further rights or services where appropriate, ensuring that decisions remained focused on the best interests and welfare of the child. Inspectors noted this advocacy on children's behalf through the review of files and in discussions with foster carers.

An 'identified needs' template developed by Origins Foster Care was completed every six months and tracked the assessment needs of children with complex needs and recommendations from assessments, how these were progressed and who was responsible. In addition, each child's needs were discussed in case management records and in communication with children's social workers, all of which aimed to ensure that nothing was missed and opportunities were not lost to support children.

Child participation plans were reviewed by inspectors and found to be of good quality with individualised plans around communication and how children like to engage with professionals. Plans were made with children around how they would be supported to express their views in a way that reflected their individual communication preferences, ensuring participation was meaningful; this promoted children's rights and provided them with a voice, supporting their needs no matter how they liked to communicate or what challenges they had.

Foster carers were seen to make excellent efforts to enhance and support family contact and foster carers demonstrated an understanding of how maintaining these connections was essential in supporting a child's identity, emotional wellbeing, and sense of belonging. Foster carers facilitated family contact, even in more complex or sensitive circumstances. Their engagement in training, such as attachment and trauma informed care, ensured they were equipped to understand the significance of maintaining family relationships. Foster carers were recognised by Tusla social workers and guardian ad litem³ for responding appropriately to very complex situations and the support they received from their link workers ensured they had the capacity to respond to complex needs.

Inspectors found examples of regular and meaningful family contact being facilitated in a way that promoted relationships amongst families and between sibling groups. Foster carers were seen to take ownership of such arrangements, embedding them into their family life and promoting continuity of relationships. Photos of children's families were seen in foster carer's homes, ensuring they

³ A person who supports children to have their voice heard in certain types of legal proceedings, and makes an independent assessment of the child's interests.

maintained a constant presence in the daily life for the children in their care. Foster carers were noted through file reviews to facilitate any curiosity the children had about their birth family and to have respectful contact with birth families, sending pictures of access and other events in the child's life. Trainings were identified to promote relationships between children in foster care and their birth families and promoting positive views of birth family.

Communication between link workers and foster carers was described by foster carers as "exceptional". The inspection found that the particular needs and interests of children were appropriately addressed with evidence of their participation in therapeutic supports and activities aligned with their talents and strengths. Foster carers were supported to attend child-in-care reviews ensuring their participation, as well as their full awareness, in the planning for the children in their care. Further to this, the inspection found that within child-in-care reviews, the child's long term care arrangements were discussed. Where a child was in a short term placement, the suitability of extending that placement was discussed in advance of referral to the foster care committee. This supported early planning and facilitated the timely identification of stable placements for children.

The inspection found that safe care plans were on all files reviewed by inspectors; they were thorough and addressed issues such as how to dress around the home, personal care, showing affection and managing challenging behaviour. Garda Síochána (police) vetting was also noted to be on file for regular visitors to the home, all which contributed to an environment where the child felt safe and which aimed to ensure a comfortable and safe home environment for all.

Origins Foster Care supported a safe and secure living environment for children in their care through health and safety assessments of the homes of foster carers, unannounced visits, regular supervision and comprehensive background checks on visitors to the home. There was a holistic approach to support offered; inspectors found that both foster children and the carer's biological children received dedicated attention. Foster carers facilitated meaningful family connections and advocated for the specific education and therapeutic needs of the children in their care. Individualised child participation plans were completed with children to give them the opportunity to tell Origins Foster Care how they feel about their fostering experience in a manner that is comfortable for them. For these reasons, the service has been judged as being compliant.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 10: Safeguarding and child protection

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

Origins Foster Care had robust safeguarding systems in place to support children's safety and wellbeing in all areas of service provision. Child protection and welfare concerns were responded to and reported in a timely manner with effective collaboration evident between the service and Tusla. Staff and foster carers received the necessary training and they understood their role and responsibilities as mandated persons in safeguarding children in line with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (2017) and other relevant legislation. Staff and foster carers were aware of who the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)⁴ and deputy DLP was within Origins Foster Care. Training in safeguarding was offered regularly to equip foster carers with the knowledge and confidence to recognise, respond to and report concerns, ensuring children were protected from harm and their welfare was prioritised. Origins Foster Care had extensive safeguarding policies and guidances which set out how staff and foster carers worked together to promote the safety and well-being of children in care. These policies were aligned with national guidance and legislation.

Safeguarding decision making discussions were a relatively new procedure being used by Origins Foster Care at the time of inspection. These consisted of a structured template which was used to document safeguarding discussions between link workers and team leaders. These included the management and rationale for decisions made, such as whether an incident required completion of a significant event notification or a child protection notification to Tusla portal. These safeguarding decision making discussions also captured issues that did not meet the threshold for reporting but still the information or incident was recorded. This brought incidents to the attention of team leaders and principal social worker. A sample of these decision making discussions were reviewed and clear decisions were identified from the discussions with specific actions to be completed and by whom.

A sample of child protection and welfare notifications were reviewed by inspectors and it was identified that they were appropriately reported to Tusla and other relevant authorities as required. Safeguarding decision making discussions took place promptly upon receipt of information and the subsequent appropriate actions were agreed. Actions included the completion of a significant event notification (SEN) as well as the joint submission of the child protection and welfare report form (CPWRF) by foster carer and link worker, as well as the notification to the Gardaí if appropriate. Safe care plans were updated where necessary and good communication was noted between link workers and the child

⁴ A person nominated by an organisation to receive allegations of abuse or safeguarding concerns.

in care social workers. Significant event notifications provided a detailed account of the nature of the incident and the action taken and when the incident was reported. All trackers were updated with regard to SEN and CPWRF completion. Inspectors noted also that Origins Foster Care staff and foster carers captured and identified potential child protection and welfare concerns. This approach supported the tracking of all information and facilitated discussion to determine appropriate actions. Inspectors also found good communication between Origins Foster Care and Tusla to discuss information and determine whether a child protection notification should be submitted.

Foster carers had access to a broad range of training across areas relevant to the needs of children in their care, and additional training was provided in response to any identified or emerging needs. Foster carer's training reflected a strong emphasis on Children First (2017), promoting children's safety, safe care and understanding abuse and exploitation risks, amongst other topics. Any gaps in understanding that were noted by link workers were followed through with additional support and training offered to foster carers. In the support and supervision of foster carers, safeguarding was always a focus for link workers. To address any gaps in safeguarding knowledge link workers revisited the training materials with foster carers and ensured all information was clearly understood and that foster carers were confident in their safeguarding responsibilities. Foster carers spoke about a strong emphasis on safeguarding, attachment and trauma and foster carers commented that they were provided with additional training where needed. If unable to attend training, link workers facilitated the training at another time directly with the foster carer, demonstrating the commitment of link workers to ensuring foster carers were equipped to manage potential risks and safeguard children in their care.

Foster carers were clear in their roles as mandated persons; their obligation to notify any suspected harm, any abuse or neglect and these notifications were completed jointly with their link worker. Origins Foster Care placed huge importance on joint decision making processes to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children in placement. In the sample of supervision records reviewed, inspectors found that safeguarding was regularly discussed with foster carers. Foster carers were also aware of the out-of-hours service and understood how to access it, if required. This supported the timely identification and response to any safety concerns.

There were no allegations against foster carers in the twelve months prior to the inspection.

Safeguarding register review meetings took place monthly to review these safeguarding decision making discussions, to ensure actions were followed up. If

there were any outstanding actions these were highlighted with the team leader at the review meeting who would then follow through on actions yet to be completed. These minutes were reviewed and inspectors found that all safeguarding decision making discussions were comprehensively reviewed and discussed and appropriate actions taken. This further highlighted Origins Foster Care's commitment to safeguarding children within their service and safeguarding register review meetings represented a robust follow through on safeguarding concerns.

All foster carers had an allocated link worker to support and guide them through their fostering experience. They visited the home regularly, conducting both announced and unannounced visits, and, where necessary, visits were conducted jointly with child-in-care social workers. Unannounced visits took place once annually and inspectors saw evidence that their own policy in respect to this was followed. Frequent supervision also took place which monitored and evaluated the performance of foster carers. Thorough supervision provided support as well as looking at training requirements and safeguarding protocols and the stress levels of the carers, all to ensure foster carers were provided with the support required.

Foster carers were vocal in their compliments about Origins Foster Care service, commenting on the training provided, the excellent communication and the professionalism of the staff. The fostering service also planned for increased support and supervision when deemed necessary, whether stemming from special educational needs of a child or a significant event. Origins Foster Care recognised that additional supports, when needed, enhanced the quality of safeguarding and the care that foster carers could offer to children in their care.

Foster carers spoke of their link workers undertaking additional training to enhance their own knowledge and skills in order to be able to better support foster carers who were caring for children with specific or complex needs. This strengthened the quality of support provided to foster carers, ensuring they received informed, practical guidance that reflected the specific challenges of caring for children with additional and complex needs or behaviours. This enabled link workers to offer more targeted advice and consistent support to foster carers. Foster carers were also aware of their right to refuse to accept a placement and this was something they felt comfortable to do if necessary, due to their sound working relationships with link workers who helped them consider whether a particular child would be a suitable match for their family.

A comprehensive tracking system was in place to monitor Garda vetting for foster carers, support carers and household members. The tracker also recorded key compliance requirements such as health and safety checks, Children First (2017) training and safety plans. The principal social worker reviewed the status of Garda

vetting every two months as part of a scheduled oversight meeting, ensuring that all vetting requirements remained up to date and appropriately monitored. From the sample of files reviewed, all Garda vetting was up-to-date for foster carers and all adult members of the household.

Holiday risk assessments were completed to identify any potential hazards while away from the home and outlined safety strategies to manage while away on holidays. The form also ensured the child's perspective was recorded.

Protocols were in place to guide responses to children missing from care, and foster carers spoken to demonstrated an understanding of the required actions. Safe care plans were in place and were updated in consultation with the link worker; these reflected what actions to take should a child in care go missing. At the time of inspection, there were no children missing from care. Data provided by Origins Foster Care prior to the inspection indicated that two incidents of children missing from care had occurred in the 12 months prior to the inspection. Inspectors reviewed one such incident and were satisfied that it was appropriately managed; the significant event notification was completed, the child protection notification was submitted and the matter was appropriately closed. The child's social worker was notified, an interim safety plan was put in place and the social worker spoke with the child. The matter continued to be monitored by Origins Foster Care, with both management and Tusla senior management being aware.

The inspection found that Garda vetting was in place for the partners of adult children, despite not having a role in caring for the children. This demonstrated that Origins Foster Care was proactively identifying and managing potential risks. In order to manage and monitor these potential risks, Origins Foster Care had safety plans in place. At the time of the inspection fourteen safety plans were in place for January and February 2026, nine of which related to Garda vetting for the partners of adult children as noted above. All safety plans had a review date and a safety plan tracker captured the date of the safety plan and when it was last reviewed. The status, for example, whether it continued to be open and the reason for the safety plan, was recorded on the tracker. Origins Foster Care also kept a tracker of archived safety plans which provided a safeguarding history, allowing staff to understand past risks and any patterns occurring.

The use of interim safety plans when official background checks were pending or had expired ensured temporary protection was established for children while awaiting the completion of Garda vetting for caregivers or frequent visitors to the home, providing additional safeguarding as a precautionary measure while checks are being processed. This is used when new people become part of the family. There were no children placed in foster care households where there was Garda vetting outstanding.

A total of 22 significant events had been recorded in 2026 up to the time of the inspections. Eleven of these required child protection and welfare report forms to be completed. These were all sent to Tusla in a timely manner and communication with Tusla was evident on files reviewed. Significant events reviewed by inspectors were found to be very thorough documents, providing a detailed account of the nature of the incident, the action taken and whether a safety plan or risk management plan was required. Safe care plans were updated and good communication between Tusla social workers and Origins Foster Care was noted.

While the standards state that no more than two children are placed with a foster carer, unless they are siblings, Origins Foster Care had three households that exceeded these standards. Inspectors reviewed a sample of these and found that they had been approved before the foster care committee. Origins Foster Care and the child-in-care team completed a thorough matching process and assessed the birth children's needs alongside the foster carer's capacity. Detailed safe care plans were in place for the children. Foster carers demonstrated strong advocacy for the children in their care and were commended by the foster care committee for the high standard of care provided. Detailed safe care plans were in place for all children in the placement. Despite the placement being over numbers, the level of care and commitment to all the children was noted by the foster care committee as exemplary and there was no negative impact noted for any of the children in placements that were over numbers.

The inspection found that the fostering service demonstrated strong and effective safeguarding practices, with robust systems in place to monitor safety plans, Garda vetting, and significant events. Child protection and welfare concerns were responded to promptly and reported appropriately, with clear evidence of good collaboration and communication with Tusla. Foster carers were well supported through regular supervision, targeted safeguarding training, and responsive link worker engagements ensuring that they were confident in their safeguarding responsibilities as mandated persons. The service showed a commitment to continuous improvement, including strengthened notification processes and structured safeguarding decision making. Comprehensive tracking systems and oversight arrangements ensured risks were identified, managed and reviewed effectively. Foster carers provided high-quality, child-centred care, advocating strongly for children, facilitating safe environments, and working collaboratively with professionals to promote positive outcomes and to safeguard children. While there were placements over numbers, there was no impact on the children in placement. Origins Foster Care had a safeguarding policy aligned with Children First (2017) and safeguarding was embedded throughout the service through their social work practice, risk management and escalation procedures, governance and oversight processes. For these reasons, the service has been judged as being compliant.

Standard 14a: Assessment and approval for Non-relative foster carers

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

Origins Foster Care had a clear policy in place for the assessment and approval of foster carers which was aligned with Tusla's *National Fostering Assessment Framework* (2015). The policy set out a structured, transparent and consistent process for the recruitment, screening, assessment and approval of foster carers. Their policy ensured that all applicants were treated fairly, and that assessments were completed to a high standard, and that the welfare and best interests of children remained central. Their policy was informed by human rights principles and detailed the full pathway from initial enquiry through to approval, including information sessions, screening visits and outcomes. It also specified the requirement to complete 'Foundations for Fostering' training prior to the formal application and clearly set out all required checks, documentation, assessment and approval processes, as well as safeguarding and recording requirements so that prospective foster carers were fully informed.

Origins Foster Care had a comprehensive policy to ensure that biological children of families engaging in the fostering assessment were included in the process. The policy outlined that biological children should be actively consulted during the assessment and provided with information to ensure they understood how fostering would impact their lives. By integrating the perspectives of the biological children, Origins Foster Care hoped to strengthen the overall assessment and the stability of future foster placements. Foster carers spoke about Origin Foster Care being 'interested in their children' and they were mindful of their welfare during and after the assessment process.

Data provided by the service to HIQA indicated that 12 assessments had been completed in the 12 months prior to the inspection. Of these assessments, nine had been approved. A further five were still undergoing assessment and there were two waiting to be assessed. The reports presented to the foster care committee, where decisions about approval to foster were made, were very clear in their rationale and recommendations. Inspectors reviewed three of the assessment reports and found them to be timely, comprehensive and of a high standard. Foster carers participated in the assessment and described it as comprehensive and a positive experience. The reports provided a clear and balanced analysis of the applicant's capacity to meet the needs of children in care,

drawing on multiple sources of information including interviews, references and background checks. Reports demonstrated a thorough exploration of applicant's motivation, parenting capacity, understanding of fostering and ability to respond to children's emotional and developmental needs. The voices of all household members, including birth children were reflected and any safeguarding considerations were explicitly addressed. The reports supported the foster care committee to be fully informed in their decision making regarding approval. Foster carers told inspectors that they were offered the opportunity to review the report prior to its submission to the foster care committee and inspectors saw evidence of this on file review also.

Origins Foster Care demonstrated adherence to timelines, with the majority of foster care assessment completed within the 16-week requirement. Thorough oversight of the assessment process was noted by inspectors.

The service's *Children in families that foster support* policy looked to ensure that children living within foster families were actively included in assessment, approval and supervision and support processes, and that their safety, rights and participation were upheld. It outlined how children's voices were sought and considered in assessments and support planning. The service was clearly committed to the welfare of every child within the fostering household in their assessment process.

All foster carers received extensive information on becoming a foster carer outlining all information they would need about the organisation, its policies, procedures, models of practice and supports available to them in their role as foster carers. They were informed of all required checks, documentation, assessment and approval processes, as well as safeguarding and recording requirements. Applicants underwent a comprehensive assessment by an experienced senior practitioner social worker who prepared a comprehensive report on the motivation and suitability of the applicants to present before a foster care committee. Foster care applicants were kept up-to-date on the assessment process. There was good oversight of assessments provided by team leaders. Origins Foster Care carried out extensive checks and Garda vetting was completed prior to the placement of a child. All household members were part of the assessment and their views were sought and contained within the report. When applicants received their copy of the assessment report they were given the opportunity to add to the report if they so wished or suggest changes. They were also offered the opportunity to attend the foster care committee meeting if they so wished. The foster care committee's decision was clearly outlined and applicants were informed of the outcome. Foster carer contracts were signed for each child placed with the carers.

Origins Foster Care had clear policies on the assessment and approval of foster carers. The majority of foster care assessments were completed in line with the time frame outlined in national standards and completed to a high standard. Applicants were given expansive written information on the assessment process. All the necessary checks were completed along with Garda vetting, medical checks and references, all of which were seen on file. Foster carers were offered the opportunity to attend the foster care committee and all reviewed the assessment report before it was presented. They were informed formally of their approval status and the placement of children did not occur until after the approval process was completed. Children were placed with foster carers in line with their approval status and signed and up-to-date contracts were in place for each child in the foster home. Assessments were completed in line with national standards. They were timely and of good quality. For these reasons, the service has been judged to be compliant with this standard.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 17: Reviews of foster carers

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

Origins Foster Care service aim to ensure that foster care reviews were held within the national standards required timelines. The first review took place one year after a child was placed with the carers and subsequently every three years, unless an additional review was required, in line with national standards. Data provided by the Origins Foster Care stated that 11 reviews were held in the last 12 months and 34 reviews held in the past three years; inspectors sampled from these 11 reviews.

Foster care review reports submitted to the foster care committee by the link workers clearly outlined any changes in circumstances since the carers' previous review. The review process incorporated extensive information gathering from children, birth families, and social workers to produce a balanced assessment of placement stability. Link workers prepared for the review by visiting the foster carer's home and discussing the foster care committee process and review process. Up-to-date Garda vetting was obtained as well as health and safety checks, ensuring safeguarding measures were thorough. A report was also provided by the Tusla social worker which acknowledged the capabilities of carers and their working relationship with Tusla. This was an acknowledgement of the coordinated approach taken to promote the welfare of children. The link worker

provided details such as a description of the home environment, the number of placements since the last review and any changes in circumstances. The views of foster children were sought and considered, alongside the perspectives of birth parents if obtained, and the foster carer's own children. The reviews demonstrated a collaborative approach incorporating the views of all people involved in the child's care.

The policy mandated immediate reviews of serious concerns such as allegations or if significant household changes arose. Inspectors reviewed the preparation for an additional review that had been appropriately identified but had not yet taken place. The review report was submitted by Origins and a date for this review had been scheduled and the documentation on file explained the reason for the delay in being heard by the foster care committee; this delay was outside the control of Origins. Documentation prepared for the review was comprehensive and of a high standard, clearly reflecting the views of all relevant stakeholders. This review was being held at the request of the foster care committee who, at the time of the last review, requested the next review should take place within two years as opposed to three years.

Foster carer's approval status changed at foster care committee when the type of fostering they offered changed; for example from respite to short term or for a long-term match. Detailed committee minutes of the foster care reviews were evidenced on file and issues such as concerns raised by children or trainings required by foster carers were explored. Children were placed in line with the approval status of foster carers and any change to status went before the foster care committee for approval in advance of placing children.

Data provided by the service prior to the inspection showed that 11 foster carer reviews had been planned and held in the last twelve months. Inspectors reviewed a sample of these reviews and found them to be thorough with a focus on the care provided to the children as priority. The reviews looked at the needs of children and how they were met within the placement and the reviews were all timely, noting clearly on file the reason for review. Recommendations of the foster care committee provided a clear, well documented rationale for all decisions regarding the approval and review of foster carers and foster carers were informed of the outcome of reviews when completed. Inspectors did not evidence any deregistration of foster carers during this inspection.

Inspectors saw evidence of recommendations made for foster carers to participate in particular training and inspectors found that these were consistently followed up. Where training had not yet been completed, it had been appropriately identified and scheduled within defined timeframes. Foster carer reviews were presented with up-to-date health and safety inspections, Garda vetting and also

ensured Children First (2017) training was completed, as well as noting updated learning and development plans for foster carers on file. Reviews were attended by link workers, fostering team leaders and foster carers, where they chose to attend.

Administrative staff used tracking systems to maintain continuous oversight of the reviews and their system of monitoring gave sufficient time to carers to meaningfully reflect on their duties and whether they wished to provide their own report to the committee, while also ensuring sufficient time to complete up-to-date vetting for the review. The service approached families six months prior to proposed review date and monthly meetings between administrative staff, team leaders, link workers and principal social worker ensured all documentation was ready for the committee. Any delays in receiving documentation that might delay a review was escalated to the principal social worker who followed up on delayed documentation.

Reports submitted to the foster care committee were noted by inspectors to be of excellent quality, comprehensive and detailed and signed by the foster carers, link workers and team leaders. These were extensive documents, which incorporated the service's model used, which holds relationships as the centre of everything the service does and recognises the uniqueness of every family and every child they care for. The service aimed to support foster carers to recognise the uniqueness of every child in their care and this came across in the reports presented before the committee. The reviews served to confirm the ongoing suitability of foster carers and pinpoint any specific areas requiring improvement or additional support. Foster carers were made aware of when the committee were meeting and they saw the report prior to the meeting taking place. They were also informed of the outcome of the review and any changes to their approval status or recommendations made by the committee, for example additional training. The child's social worker was also updated after the foster carer review.

Origins Foster Care ensured that link workers maintained manageable caseloads, enabling them to develop strong relationships with foster families. This facilitated regular and meaningful contact, ensuring link workers had a comprehensive understanding of each family and could present a well-informed and robust account of the carers and their skills at review.

With regard to reviews of foster carers, the service was found to facilitate a very comprehensive process. Reviews were timely, thorough and in line with national standards. Review reports were of a high quality, providing comprehensive and balanced assessments informed by the views of children, birth families, foster carers and professionals. The foster care committee demonstrated clear oversight, with well documented rationale for decisions, including changes to approval status

where required. Recommendations, particularly in relation to training, were consistently followed up and monitored within defined timeframes. Strong administrative tracking systems ensured reviews were well-prepared, with all necessary documentation, including Garda vetting and health and safety checks, were up to date. Foster carers were kept informed throughout the process and supported to participate meaningfully. Link workers maintained manageable caseloads, enabling them to develop strong relationships with families and provide informed contributions to reviews.

Overall, foster care reviews were conducted in line with regulations and national standards. Reviews were completed within required timeframes and were of a good quality, ensuring that the needs and circumstances of children in care were appropriately addressed. Where warranted, additional reviews would be convened, for example if the foster care committee recommended convening a review sooner than required by national standards. Inspectors saw one such review which was recommended for a foster carer who had transferred from another foster care service. The foster care committee was appropriately informed of the outcomes of all reviews, supporting effective oversight and decision-making. Foster carers were well prepared for reviews and were assisted in the preparation of documentation by administration staff. Origins Foster Care ensured that Garda vetting was completed for all adult members of foster carer households, in line with safeguarding requirements, thereby supporting the continued safety and welfare of children in care. For these reasons, the service has been deemed as being compliant with this standard.

Judgment: Compliant

Standard 19 : Management and monitoring of foster care services

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

Origins Foster Care had clear governance and decision-making structures in place which were overseen by an advisory board of independent experts contributing to governance and oversight of the foster care service. This board was formed in 2025 and meet every three months. This board consisted of independent experts in their own fields to provide information and guidance within each participant's area of expertise and to contribute to Origin Foster Cares governance and oversight. A business support manager was also part of these meetings and it was planned that a compliance officer would also become part of this advisory group in quarter two of 2026 due to the expansion of the service. This board reviewed the risks and provided an additional layer of oversight. The minutes of these meetings

were reviewed by inspectors and they were seen to focus on matters such as growth, governance meetings and the risk register as well as compliance with national standards. The minutes were thorough, action-focused and structured.

The chair of the board meets approximately every six weeks, with the CEO (chief executive officer) to be updated and is briefed on the safeguarding register and any service risks. As previously stated in this report, the CEO also holds the role of principal social worker and was subject to appropriate supervision arrangements which supported effective oversight across both roles.

The CEO met quarterly with the Tusla area manager as part of the governance arrangements with Tusla. These meeting minutes were reviewed and were found to be very thorough, covering matters such as out-of-hours support to foster carers, recruitment of staff, assessment of foster carers and any transfers into the service.

The inspection found that the service had robust auditing and monitoring systems in place which ensured that all aspects of the service were regularly reviewed and tracked. These systems were reviewed by inspectors and all aspects of the service were tracked and reviewed by the appropriate staff. These systems provided clear oversight of practice, identified if there were any areas requiring improvement and ensured actions were implemented in a timely manner. For example, the CEO, business support manager and team leader met monthly to track progression of actions agreed through safeguarding decision making discussions held between link workers and team leaders. These meetings tracked the progress from the formation of the action plan right through to its implementation. The review meeting then confirmed that actions agreed during the safeguarding decision making discussions had been followed through. This demonstrated effective tracking of decisions and actions, contributing to robust oversight and ensuring all actions were followed through.

The service had a comprehensive risk management policy focusing on safeguarding children which emphasised individual safety plans, regular link worker visits and formal reporting of significant events or welfare concerns to identify and mitigate potential hazards. Inspectors reviewed two of the seven child protection and welfare report forms submitted in 2026 and they were appropriately sent to Tusla and relevant authorities in a timely manner. These were tracked and included the action taken and whether a safety plan was required as well as planning meetings held with Tusla and the outcome of the child protection and welfare report form (CPWRF) from Tusla. Regular audits, monthly safeguarding reviews and mandatory training for both staff and foster carers demonstrated rigorous oversight and focus on continuously maintaining safeguarding as a goal of the service. The service demonstrated a desire to

constantly improve, with service improvement planning meetings taking place every six weeks. This provided a space to look at the outcome of audits and updated policies. It also was a space for the whole team to collaborate and talk through any issues. Goals for the service included supporting foster carers to engage with each other through support lunches and also the participation of children through online interactions.

As previously highlighted, child participation was a key focus for Origins Foster Care and child participation plans completed annually aimed to identify children's individual communication needs with a focus on how best to facilitate their participation. Origins demonstrated a desire to continue to try to do better. Origins explored alternative approaches to engaging children and young people who may be less inclined to meet with professionals, including the use of online activities to address this potential gap. Inspectors observed that the service maintained a strong emphasis on children's participation and the promotion of children's rights as an overall focus.

Planning for education programs for foster carers and social work staff outlined specific learning modules, covering topics such as child development and trauma. Reviewing new digital tools for communication and the scheduling of support groups and appreciation events were other means by which the service fostered a community of support and appreciation amongst foster carers who told inspectors that they felt listened to, supported and appreciated in their roles. Origins Foster Care was acutely aware that foster carers who felt a sense of belonging and appreciation were more likely to continue in their role, leading to fewer placement breakdowns, greater consistency in care and stronger attachments for children. Foster carers spoke to inspectors of their trust in the service and the excellent communication which leads to a positive fostering culture. Inspectors noted from governance meeting minutes reviewed, supervisions held and conversations with staff and foster carers, that Origins Foster Care recognised that consistent support of foster carers is fundamental to the effective governance and sustainability of the service.

Practice coordination meetings tracked essential safety requirements such as Garda vetting and the recording of any changes in the household which might prompt action needed by the service to ensure child safety. Safeguarding register review meetings were held monthly to cross reference all required actions and ensure tasks such as child protection notifications or significant event notifications have been completed.

Garda vetting audits took place every two months. Individual administrative staff were assigned to each foster carer and so families get to know their administrative support person, as well as their link worker. The link worker retains responsibility

for ensuring the vetting is completed but the administrative support follows up and tracks progress ensuring the carers are supported in getting their documents completed on time. The audits were completed by business support and the principal social worker bi-monthly for each family to review their vetting. The inspection found that this system of auditing was effective. The audits identified when Garda vetting was due to expire and this was followed up promptly, therefore avoiding vetting going out of date for foster carers or adult members of their household.

Origins had robust auditing systems in place that supported comprehensive oversight of all areas of practice. These systems were implemented consistently and were subject to regular review, ensuring that findings informed service improvements and strengthened overall governance.

Origins Foster Care had a strategic plan in place for 2026. This document outlined strategic goals which planned to enhance governance frameworks and expand the workforce to accommodate an increasing number of placements. Inspectors were told of an additional team leader employed in 2025 to enhance oversight. Origin Foster Care plans to separate the roles of CEO & principal social worker in 2026 which will also ensure a separation between strategic leadership and practice oversight. Origins Foster Care focus on employing senior practitioner social workers with extensive experience which demonstrates their commitment to providing quality support to foster carers and the children they care for. Link workers have protected caseloads to give them the time to effectively manage their case load and support their foster carers and ensure they meet policy requirements around supervision, home visits and other requirements. Origins Foster Care used an information system which supported the oversight of the service with good record keeping noted by inspectors. Daily logs completed by foster carers also featured.

Staff told inspectors that there were robust safety procedures in place and as a result they felt supported and confident in their practice. They further added that they had ready access to team leaders to discuss and review decisions, and the principal social worker was also accessible for guidance and support. Staff spoke of not being overburdened and had the time to spend effectively supporting their foster carers. Origins Foster Care worked consistently to maintain a high standard of service to the children in their care. While they were continuously expanding, their focus remained on a high quality service to foster carers and the safeguarding of children. The maintaining of protected caseloads for workers was a vital part of this continuous focus on quality, ensuring that their link workers had the time and space to work supportively and effectively with foster carers, giving them the time they need to feel supported and confident in their roles as foster carers. Link workers maintained high levels of contact with the carers they

supported. The service ensured they were adequately resourced in terms of staffing in order to provide a high quality service and in order to ensure they met their statutory requirements. Inspectors noted that case management files were up-to-date with workloads being managed in a way that enabled staff to maintain accurate and timely records.

Auditing systems were extremely thorough and provided good oversight. The service employed a compliance officer to review the service provided and to ensure compliance with national standards. Any gaps identified were acted upon promptly. For example, the safeguarding decision making discussions were a result of recommendations by the compliance officer following a file audit conducted in October 2025. These decision making discussions were the point from which all practice flowed and Origins Foster Care staff and management spoke positively about the changes brought about following this audit. Origins Foster Care demonstrated a desire to constantly examine their practice and function and question where to improve and this willingness to self-examine was evident throughout governance meeting minutes reviewed on the whole.

There was a system in place to review all safeguarding concerns on the safeguarding register at a monthly meeting attended by the administrative staff, team leaders and principal social worker. This register was also reviewed during clinical supervision with the principal social worker and so safeguarding was picked up at multiple settings, including through the principal social worker's own supervision. Safeguarding was also viewed on link worker's supervision files and these reviews were both comprehensive and action focused.

Origins Foster Care had a strong focus on trauma informed care and safeguarding, as evidenced on the training tracker. Training delivered in 2025 maintained an emphasis on Children First (2017) responsibilities and mandated reporting awareness, safe care, risk management and responding to concerns. This ensured carers remained up to date, vigilant and confident in safeguarding responsibilities, and the oversight of training for foster carers and staff alike was monitored effectively. Trainings such as 'navigating peer relationships' and 'trauma informed parenting' offered to foster carers helped foster carers to understand the behaviours foster children may exhibit and to respond in a therapeutic way, rather than reactively. Foster carers spoke of how impactful the appropriate training can be in maintaining stability in placements.

Staff had regular supervision where their practice and time was accounted for. Supervision was found to be in line with policy. Inspectors reviewed a sample of supervision files and found them to be comprehensive with extensive discussions taking place around case load management. Supervision included training and support needs of both the worker and foster carers. These supervision sessions

provided additional oversight, supporting accountability and safe service delivery through thorough case discussion and follow up actions. Origins Foster Care used structured supervision by means of a template and this provided well-thought-out support to staff in ensuring the provision of a high quality service.

Origins Foster Care was a well-resourced service that had an experienced team who provided a high quality service in a supportive environment. Origins Foster Care staff were clear on their roles and responsibilities and the inspection found that they carried out their duties to a high standard. Robust governance and management systems were in place. Oversight was provided through a range of mechanisms which included consultation with children, supervision and regular communication with foster carers, professional meetings with Tusla as well as regular oversight meetings, auditing systems and effective case management. Origins Foster Care had a focus on quality assurance and improvement, ensuring resources were adequate to maintain a quality service to foster carers. Origins Foster Care demonstrated a desire to continuously reflect, examine and make changes to ensure the delivery of a safe and effective service. Risks were appropriately identified and managed in a timely manner. Auditing and tracking systems were in place providing key information and giving clear data regarding compliance. For these reasons, this service was found to be compliant.

Judgment: Compliant

Appendix 1:

National Standards for Foster Care (2003) and

Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations,⁵ 1995

Standard 9	A safe and positive environment
Standard 10	Safeguarding and child protection
Standard 14(a)	Assessment and approval of Non-relative foster carers
Regulations Part III, Article 5 Part III, Article 9	Assessment of foster parents Contract
Standard 14 (b)	Assessment and approval of Relative foster carers
Regulations Part III, Article 5 Part III, Article 6 Part III, Article 9	Assessment of relatives Emergency Placements Contract
Standard 17	Reviews of Foster carers
Standard 19	Management and monitoring of foster care services
Regulations Part IV, Article 12 Part IV, Article 17	Maintenance of register Supervision and visiting of children

⁵ Child Care (Placement of Children in Foster Care) Regulations, 1995

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