

The logo for TúsLA, featuring the word 'TúsLA' in a stylized font. 'Tús' is in green and 'LA' is in blue. The letters are bold and sans-serif.

TúsLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

A large, stylized graphic of a ship's wheel, rendered in shades of green and blue, centered on the page. The wheel has eight spokes and a dark blue center. The text 'CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL CENTRES' is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the wheel.

CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL CENTRES

THIS IS A SUPPORTING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR AFTERCARE, WHICH SHOULD BE READ
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 'NATIONAL AFTERCARE POLICY FOR ALTERNATIVE CARE'

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Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	The role of the residential social care worker – residential care settings	4
3.0	Planning and preparation – residential care settings	4
4.0	Care plan	5
5.0	Assessment of need	5
6.0	Aftercare plan	5
7.0	Placement plan	6
8.0	Preparation for leaving care and the role of residential care	7
9.0	Aftercare planning in the residential settings	8
10.0	Aftercare steering committees	8
11.0	Best practice tips	9

This document should be read in conjunction with the National Policy for Aftercare, 2017.

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of residential care is to provide a safe, nurturing environment for individual children and young people who cannot live at home or in an alternative family environment (such as foster care or a relative's home). It aims to meet in a planned way the physical, educational, emotional, spiritual, health and social needs of each child (Alternative Care Handbook, 2014).

A Residential Care Centre is staffed with qualified social care workers; all residential Centres have a Centre Manager who is responsible for the day to day operations, care of young people, development and oversight of young people's plans and ensuring each young person is supported throughout their placement. A full picture of the structures and types of residential can be found in the Alternative Care Handbook 2014. It is with this in mind it must be noted that Residential Centres can have different purposes and functions, however one of the fundamental purposes of every residential facility is to support the young person in all aspects of their life and as part of their preparation for leaving care support them in developing the skills they will require as they transition into adulthood.

For whatever the reason a young person needs to be in a residential care setting they can be assured that every possible effort will be made to ensure they are safe and that their needs are met. Each young person will have an allocated Social Worker and a residential staff team who will support and care for them throughout their time in the residential setting. However short or long term a young person's placement may be, each young person will have a placement plan and a care plan. All young people in Residential Care will have a Social Worker allocated to them throughout their placement. All young people will be assigned at least one key worker whose primary role will be to take care of the young person and advocate for their needs and wishes throughout their time in residential care.

Residential care has a key role in working with and supporting young people in reaching all of their developmental milestones and preparing them for the challenges they may face and the events in their life. The transition to leaving care for children and young people is a significant time. Planning and preparation is essential. It is a fundamental principle of residential care staff to prepare young people for this transition. This preparation not only includes the teaching and learning of skills such as budgeting, cooking and shopping, it also means giving them skills for life such as self-protection, education about safe relationships, sex and health (Alternative Care Handbook, 2014).

Recommendations from the Ryan Report recognised the need for a dedicated post to aftercare within Residential Care. In this regard it is best practice and in line with the Ryan recommendation that each residential centre has a staff member who has the following responsibilities:

- Support young people in their preparation for leaving care in the centre.
- Be familiar with the National Aftercare Policy, 2017 and accompanying guidance documents.
- Establish links with the local aftercare teams.
- Support the development of best practice and working relationships between residential care centres and aftercare teams.
- Support the care planning processes which encompasses the preparation for leaving care and implementation of aftercare plans.
- Be a resource to other residential staff in relation to issues relating to aftercare.

2.0 The role of the residential social care worker – Residential care settings

Establishing a positive relationship with a young person is one of the key principles for every staff member, not just the centre manager and key worker. Every staff member working in the residential care centre has a responsibility to ensure the young person receives the best possible care and to ensure the best possible outcome and achievements are made with the young person throughout their placement. Positive relationship development with young people is the key principle for residential care workers and is the fundamental basis for supporting young people and their families through their care experience. A residential care worker will support a young person to develop to their full potential, develop key skills that they will need for their future, both in terms of practical life skills and support them to grow and develop the necessary coping skills.

3.0 Planning and preparation – Residential care settings

As noted above planning and preparation are the two core necessities when supporting a young person to develop the necessary life and social skills they will require for their future. There are a number of key stages in this planning and preparation process and each of these planning tools (listed below) will support and guide the young person and professionals working with them to ensure that the best possible outcome can be achieved with the optimum objective at its core which is to support the young person developing a level of resilience to cope with adversities that all care leavers will face, securing training, employment and further higher education, establishing them in accommodation, good social networks.

Social care teams, aftercare teams and social work teams will in consultation with each young person develop care plans, placement plans and aftercare plans that support and guide necessary goals and tasks to address the issues that are presenting for each young person. Young people will be encouraged to take part in and own these plans, young people's families and or significant others will be consulted on the plans. Assessment of need, placement planning and aftercare planning are core components to this process. All documents and planning processes must be intrinsically linked to ensure positive outcomes for young people/young adults.

4.0 Care plan

It is a requirement for every young person in residential care to have a comprehensive care plan that clearly contains details of the actions needed to support the young person's needs and development and should also detail who is responsible for completing each aspect of the care plan and a specific timeline for completion. Care plans support the development of placement plans and should not only support the short term goals for each young person but also ensure that there is a clear focus on preparation for leaving care required for the young person's future

5.0 Assessment of need

- Education
- Financing and budgeting matters
- Training and employment
- Health and wellbeing
- Personal and social development
- Accommodation
- Family support

The assessment of need document will determine the requirement for allocation of an aftercare worker. *(Please refer to Allocation of Aftercare Worker document).*

6.0 Aftercare plan

‘The Child Care Amendment Act 2015’, section 6 places a statutory duty on Tusla to prepare an aftercare plan for an eligible child or eligible young person. The aim is to create an explicit, as opposed to implicit, statement of Tusla’s duty to satisfy itself as to the child’s or young person’s need for assistance by preparing a plan that identifies those needs for aftercare supports. Every young person leaving care who meets the eligibility criteria is entitled to an aftercare plan. This includes young adults whose primary support may be from a specialist service and not aftercare services (Tusla).

An aftercare plan is a written plan that is prepared by the aftercare worker and the young person/young adult in conjunction with their social worker and other key people in their lives. The plan is based on the assessment of need and aims to outline clearly the supports required for the young person in their transition into adulthood. An aftercare plan will be developed for all young people/young adults who are eligible. This includes young people/young adults whose primary care will be with another service. Please refer to ‘Special Considerations Guidance, 2017’.

The plan outlines the following needs:

- Education training and employment
- Health and wellbeing
- Personal and social
- Accommodation
- Finance and budgeting
- Social network and supports
- Family access and contact
- Supports from other services

An aftercare plan must be prepared six months prior to the young person’s 18th birthday.

7.0 Placement plan

All young people will have a placement plan which is developed in consultation with the young person, allocated social worker and the residential centre and where appropriate the allocated aftercare worker. Each section of the young person's placement plan focuses on supporting the young person throughout their placement in the centre and the preparation for leaving care. Each section will specify the specific tasks/interventions required to support the young person throughout their placement and their preparation for leaving residential care. When a young person is at the stage of preparing to leave care the placement plan will be informed by the assessment of need.

All young people in residential care will have a placement plan, which will include the following themes:

- Activities
- Interests
- Hobbies
- Education
- Training/Work
- Family relationships/Contact
- Health
- Independent living skills*
- Individual and society
- Preparation for leaving care*
- Psychological/psychiatric/emotional needs
- Safety
- Social skills

It is essential that each young person is afforded real life practical opportunities to develop their skills and residential staff must take every opportunity to encourage young people's development in terms of progressing these plans. The young person's placement plan must detail how we are going to achieve the aims and objectives set out in our care plan and aftercare plans. The placement plan

is essentially for residential workers and young people to follow and is an important tool in ensuring that key tasks are completed in line with the young person's care plan and aftercare plan. Placement plans are task orientated and must set out realistic time frames for complementation of tasks in line with the young person's age and development. The placement in all instances should allow for creativity and allow for more time to be spent on a particular area if it is so required. An integral part of these plans is that given the challenges young people face throughout their lives residential workers must ensure to lead these plans, promote positive engagement with the young person and ensure to advocate for the young person making certain their voice is heard and reflected throughout their plans.

It is also important that young people's progress is also monitored so that we can ensure to make and/or adjust the plans as required. It is essential that progress reports are reviewed by the centre manager, social workers, aftercare worker and other relevant professionals to ascertain that should changes be required to promote more fully the young people's development these are addressed promptly. The placement plan will be tailored to meet the needs of each young person and will be reviewed as required. There must be information sharing and communication between the young person, their family and all persons involved or potentially involved with the transition.

Planning and the provision of resources regarding the transition must be clear and transparent. Residential centre staff members, key workers, social workers and aftercare workers will work closely together in preparing the young person for transition.

This joint approach is essential in ensuring the young person receives the best possible start in their adult lives. The young person will be supported by the residential centre staff members throughout their placement and transition from the centre.

8.0 Preparation for leaving care and the role of residential care

Residential staff create time and space to begin focusing their work with the young people on preparation for leaving care which is based on their age and level of development. This should include:

- Budgeting/cooking/baking
- Structuring living space/cleaning living space
- Clothes/sashing
- Menu planning
- Purchasing (using different payment methods)/paying bills
- Preparing C.V.s/job applications, interviews
- Accessing community support services
- D.I.Y./banking/getting a passport/getting a medical card
- Caring for personal effects
- Managing public transport
- Accessing the Department of Social Protection,
- Accessing the SUSI grant application system
- Time management

Other skills that are required and are part of childhood development include sex education, healthy relationships, developing emotional intelligence, self-protection and health. Working with young people in achieving competence in these areas is equally important to that of having practical skills. Creating and establishing social networks for support for young people is also essential. This provides them with a clear network of support for when they move from the residential centre.

Before the young person leaves the centre to an independent living arrangement the young person's aftercare worker, social worker and key worker will ensure that the following is in place:

- A suitable placement.
- Each young person/adult should have a medical card.
- Each young person/adult should have their PPS number.
- Each young person/adult should have their passport if they have one.
- Each young person/adult should have a list of contact telephone numbers, including the centre number, the number of their GP, dentist, local Garda station, aftercare worker, family members, significant others.

9.0 Aftercare planning in the residential setting

Each young person who leaves residential care should do so in a planned and supported manner. To enable a successful transition young people should have:

- Involvement in decision making as regards their moving arrangements.
- Relevant document and life records.
- Links to or in the local community/area.
- An address book with all relevant contact details of agencies, organisation and professional persons.
- A memory book.
- A celebration of the move with all the relevant people involved in the care of the young person invited.
- Personal possessions stored away in appropriate storage containers.
- Appropriate bags and containers for their belongings.
- A named post placement support worker from the residential or aftercare team.
- A record for the contact details for the new living arrangement (Project/Landlord) and postal address.

10.0 Aftercare steering committees

Residential services have a key role in participating at regional aftercare steering committees. A service manager will attend this committee to ensure that the voice of children from residential care is represented at these committees. The service manager will also participate in the planning and delivery of a coordinated approach to case management for young people and young adults in aftercare. The regional representative will update the relevant children's residential service forums.

11.0 Best practice tips

When a young person is transitioning from residential care to independent living or another living arrangement this event is marked by a celebration in the centre and includes significant people in the life of the young person.

- Staff spend time gathering and collecting mementos of the time the young person spent in residential care to ensure that they have memories of their time in the centre.
 - Staff will make sure the young person/adult has all contact numbers they may need in the event of assistance or maintaining contact.
 - Staff will accompany the young person/adult to their new living arrangement, if the young person/adult is happy for them to do so, and settle them in.
 - It will be explicit in the aftercare plan the level of support that will be provided to young adults post transition. This can include visiting the young adult, inviting them to the center or providing outreach. This needs to be based on the needs of the young adult and agreed with the social worker and aftercare service.
 - It is essential that staff remember that even in times of challenge that young people and young adults learn all the time from their interactions with staff and this helps them develop skills. Preparing for adulthood and independence is not always about a focus on practical skills but strategies for coping with difficult situations are also as valuable.
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