



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

## Alternative Care Inspection and Monitoring Service

### Non-Statutory Foster Care Agency

<b>Monitoring ID:</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Year:</b>	<b>2026</b>

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## Monitoring Report

<b>Year:</b>	<b>2026</b>
<b>Name of Agency:</b>	<b>Origins Foster Care</b>
<b>Dates of monitoring visit:</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026</b>
<b>Monitoring Team:</b>	<b>Anne McEvoy Eileen Woods Kelly Murphy</b>
<b>Type of Monitoring Visit:</b>	<b>Announced</b>
<b>Date Final Report Issued:</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup> May 2026</b>

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## 1. Foreword

The Child and Family Agency is responsible for providing services for children who require care outside of their families of origin. This care is provided in a variety of settings, and Tusla is responsible for ensuring that this care is of a high standard for the protection and support of these children. Tusla may also commission the provision of foster care placements by non-statutory, voluntary or private, fostering agencies. The non-statutory foster care agency is required to adhere to the legislation, regulations and standards in respect of the provision of foster care within the state and demonstrate adequate knowledge of same. Tusla- Child and Family Agency was established on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014, legislated under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, and is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. The Child and Family Agency is overseen by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Tusla has responsibility for a range of services including provision of alternative care placements for children requiring protection and support including statutory foster care services. For both statutory and non-statutory foster care services Tusla retain their statutory responsibilities to children placed with these services. The approval of foster carers is the responsibility of the Tusla Foster Care Committee. Tusla and non-statutory foster care agencies are accountable for the provision of safe and effective care to these children.

The internal responsibility for governance is the ultimate responsibility of the non-statutory agency providing the foster care service. The non-statutory foster care agency will, however, be subject to the normal monitoring and inspection arrangements as outlined in the regulations and legislation, undertaken by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and where appropriate by HIQA.

The monitoring of non-statutory foster care agencies by Tusla, Child and Family Agency is required by the “National Standards for Foster Care, 2003” Standard 24.6 to ensure compliance with the Placement of Children in Foster Care Regulations, 1995. The objective of the monitoring process is to provide assurance about the quality of care, challenge poor performance and promote improvement and safeguard the rights of young people in care.

This duty is undertaken by the Alternative Care Inspection and Monitoring Service as part of the Children’s Services Regulation which is a sub directorate of the Quality and Regulation Directorate within Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The service is committed to carry out its duties in an even handed, fair and rigorous manner.

As part of the Alternative Care Inspection and Monitoring services schedule of monitoring visits of private foster care agencies in 2026, a thematic review of Standard 10 – Safeguarding and Child Protection, is being completed from Q1 onwards.

This monitoring visit will set out to determine if the agency works to ensure that children and young people in foster care are protected from abuse and neglect in line with Standard 10, Safeguarding and Child Protection, National Standards for Foster Care (2003).

Information was gathered through reviews of the foster carer files, interviews with relevant people and through a review of questionnaires returned by active foster carers within the agency.

## **Acknowledgements**

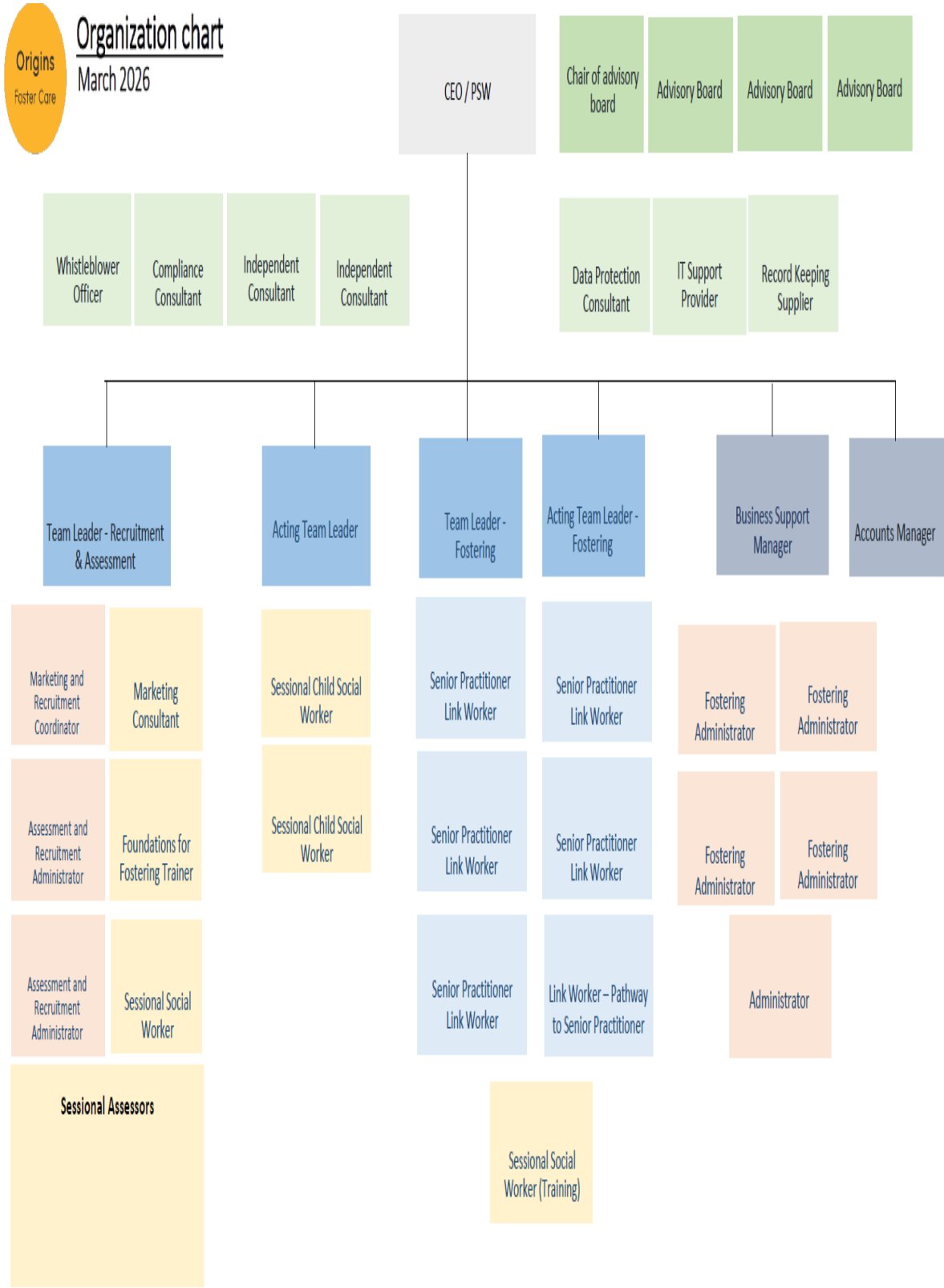
The monitoring officers would like to acknowledge the staff and management of Origins Foster Care fostering agency and the foster carers who took the time to complete questionnaires and participate in interviews, for their co-operation during the monitoring process.

## 1.1 Profile of the Foster Care Agency

Origins Foster Care is a non-statutory foster care agency and has been in operation in Ireland since 2018. This foster care agency currently provides nationwide foster care services and offers a diverse range of placements including short-term, respite and general long-term placements to young people in care. The agency operates from two offices, one based in Dublin and one in Cork. The organogram of the agency is represented under Figure 1 of this report.

Data returned by Origins Foster Care stated that the service had 38 active foster carer households providing placements to children in the care of Tusla at the time of the monitoring visit on the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026. Thirty-six of these families were general carers and two of these families provided regular respite care.

**Figure 1: Organisational structure of Origins Foster Care Fostering Service**



## 1.2 Methodology

This monitoring report sets out the findings of an announced monitoring visit carried out over two days in April 2026, to assess the agency's compliance with Standard 10 of the National Standards for Foster Care, 2003. The agency was notified of the intention to conduct this monitoring visit on the 9th March 2026.

The following documents, data sets and information was requested:

1. Organisational chart for the agency

### Documents

2. Most recent HIQA report if one completed since the last ACIMS monitoring visit
3. Policies on child protection and safeguarding, including safe care (if applicable)
4. Policy on the management of allegations and welfare concerns against foster carers.
5. Policy on training including mandatory training.
6. Policy on foster carer reviews

### Data sets

7. Number of active carers with the agency as of the 28th February 2026.
8. Number of foster carers subject to the child abuse substantiation procedure (CASP) from the 28th February 2025 to the 28th February 2026.
9. Number of carers subject to allegations of abuse and / or welfare concerns (not subject to CASP) from the 28th February 2025 to the 28th February 2026.
10. Training statistics on child protection, safeguarding and mandatory training completed by foster carers from the 28th February 2025 to the 28th February 2026.
11. Number of additional foster carer reviews undertaken following outcome of allegation / welfare concern from the 28th February 2025 to the 28th February 2026.
12. Number of carers where there is an ongoing assessment following allegation / welfare concern as of the 28th February 2026.
13. Number of carers subject to an ongoing safety plan due to allegation / welfare concern against any member of the foster carer household as of the 28th February 2026.
14. Any internal trackers of allegations / concerns against foster carers to evidence management oversight.
15. Number of child protection and welfare report forms (CPWRF) submitted to Tusla by Origins Foster Care from the 28th February 2025 to the 28th February 2026.

This report is based on a range of monitoring activities including review of the following information on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026:

- ◆ A sample of foster carer household records. Monitors reviewed six foster carer household records - this equated to 15.8% of the active foster carers within the agency and was in line with the standard operating procedure for conducting monitoring visits to review a minimum of six foster carer files.
- ◆ Relevant policies, procedures, audits and trackers.
- ◆ Foster carer questionnaires completed and submitted during the timeframe of the monitoring visit. All foster carers were afforded the opportunity to submit a questionnaire and return via post or email. A total of six completed questionnaires were returned and reviewed. This equated to a sampling of 15.8% of foster carer households.

Interviews with relevant persons that were deemed by the monitoring team as to having a bona fide interest in the operation of the service;

- ◆ Chief executive officer (CEO) (who is also the principal social worker for the agency)
- ◆ Fostering link worker x 5 (group interview, including one student social worker on placement with the agency)
- ◆ Fostering team leaders x 3 (group interview)
- ◆ Foster carers x 2

### **1.3 Summary of Monitoring Findings**

In summary, the monitors found that Origins Foster Care was operating in compliance with standard 10 of the National Standards for Foster Care 2003. This was evidenced in foster carer records such as training provision, supervision records, in interviews with foster carers and in foster carer questionnaires returned. Monitors found that there were robust oversight and governance arrangements in place to ensure agency compliance with safeguarding procedures and assessment of allegations and concerns. Monitors found that the agency was operating in line with good practice and relevant standards.

## 2. Analysis of Findings

### 2.1 Safeguarding and Child Protection

#### *Standard 10*

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

#### Safeguarding

Monitors found that all foster carer applicants underwent an assessment process and preparation for fostering training prior to approval. In interview, foster carers stated that the assessment and “foundations for fostering” training undertaken with Origins Foster Care were comprehensive in guiding carers on how to recognise and report signs of abuse and how to implement safe care practices in their own homes.

Monitors reviewed the training log for all approved foster carers and found that the Children First e-learning programme (based on the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and the Children First Act 2015) was cited as being completed by all foster carers either prior to approval or prior to the first child being placed with them. Post approval, there were a series of core training modules that were required to be completed within the first year. These included training modules on being a mandated person, the agency’s own safeguarding policy, first aid and internet safety training. Each of these training modules collectively facilitated the provision of safe care within a child’s placement. Monitors found that the agency had comprehensive internal trackers and safeguards in place to ensure compliance with their own policy on completing these training sessions within the first year of fostering and refreshers every three years thereafter.

Each carer underwent an induction to the agency post approval or transfer to the agency. This induction training reiterated safeguarding and safe care, including the requirement of mandatory training. In interview, fostering link workers also noted that during induction training, they emphasised the importance of connecting with the child being cared for before correcting any presenting behaviours. One foster carer noted the importance of “connection before correction” in their interview when discussing behaviour management techniques. All contracts signed by foster carers to provide placements for Origins Foster Care stipulated that physical punishment of children was not allowed. This was reiterated by foster carers in interview and on completed questionnaires returned to the monitors.

Prior to placement, foster carers were given relevant verbal information to support them in determining whether they felt they could safely provide a care arrangement to the child. There were instances where minimal information was available to the placing social worker however where information that could potentially impact on the success of a child's placement was known, it was found that this was given. In interview and from the questionnaires returned it was found that all foster carers were aware of their right to refuse to accept the placement of a child and were confident that their decision would be accepted and respected. This was reiterated by fostering link workers in interview also.

On reviewing a sample of foster carer records, monitors found that following the placement of a child with a foster carer, a safe care plan was discussed and implemented within six weeks, in line with the agency policy. These safe care plans evidenced discussions that had occurred around potential vulnerabilities and how to safeguard not only the child placed, but the foster carers themselves and their own children also. In interview, foster carers were cognisant of the particular vulnerability of children in care to bullying and while they had not experienced it, they were aware of their requirement to discuss all concerns with their fostering link worker and record any potential issues as part of the child's placement record. The responsibility of foster carers to maintain a record of the child's placement was further evidenced in a sample of six foster carer records reviewed by the monitors. Monitors found that each of the reviewed records held a record of events that occurred for the child while they were living with the foster carer. For those foster carers who struggled with the use of technology, additional support was provided through dedicated administrative workers to assist them in keeping accurate and updated records for the child in their care.

Monitors found that the agency was proactive in advocating for the creation and updating of absence management plans for all children placed with Origins foster carers. In the sample of foster carer records reviewed, all who had children placed with them were found to have relevant and up to date absence management plans in place. Monitors reviewed the register of escalations and found that where delays were identified in the provision of absence management plans from the child's allocated social worker, these delays were escalated to the appropriate senior management within Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Monitors found that there were two occurrences where a sibling group of two children and a non-related third child were placed in the same foster carer household. There was another occurrence where three unrelated children were placed in the one foster carer household. Monitors found that all occurrences were notified to the relevant foster care committee (FCC) in a timely manner. The committee had approved two of these instances and the third

was awaiting FCC discussion. Monitors found that there were quarterly meetings with the allocated social workers in these situations to ensure the needs of all children were being met.

Monitors found that Origins Foster Care provided ready access to out-of-hours consultation for foster carers who required it and this was referenced by foster carers interviewed. Where carers required access to counselling services, this was provided to them. The agency retained access to a panel of external consultants for the provision of guidance and advice when needed. These specialists included a trauma specialist, a specialist in child sexual abuse disclosures, systemic family therapists, a psychologist, an attachment specialist, a behaviour management practitioner and a sensory occupational therapist. Respite care was discussed and made available when required.

Monitors found that at the time of this visit, all foster carers had up to date Garda vetting on file. There were robust trackers in place, overseen by layers of administrative workers, middle and senior management to ensure that Garda vetting was tracked and applications for updating vetting were issued in a timely manner. Monitors found that where delays had occurred in the return of applications, appropriate risk assessments were in place to limit any potential child protection concern.

Monitors found that all staff employed by Origins Foster Care were provided with child protection and safeguarding training. Each staff member completed a learning and development plan each year identifying relevant training and including child protection and safeguarding. These were discussed with staff members in supervision. Monitors reviewed a sample of these plans and found them to be comprehensive particularly in relation to refreshing training on the agency's policies on child protection and safeguarding, Children First, mandated person training and retrospective disclosure training.

The principal social worker was appointed as the designated liaison person (DLP) for the agency. They were aware of their role and the responsibilities involved. In interview fostering link workers were aware of the identity of the DLP for the agency and were confident in approaching the DLP for support and guidance.

### Child Protection.

Monitors reviewed a suite of policies in place for the management of allegations of abuse and welfare concerns in relation to children in care regarding past or current incidents. These were found to be aligned to procedures devised by Tusla Child and Family Agency, in line with Children First, the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

Monitors found that from the point of application right through assessment and beyond, foster carers were advised of their role as mandated persons. Where children in their care made disclosures of abuse or neglect, foster carers were facilitated to submit child protection and welfare report forms (CPWRF) through the Tusla portal.

In October 2024, Tusla launched CASP V2. This procedure amended and updated how allegations and welfare concerns against foster carers were processed. Monitors found that all fostering link workers for this agency were provided with training on this new procedure and in interview fostering link workers were familiar with the process to be followed and their role as advocates for the foster carers concerned. To provide clarity regarding the new process, a booklet “Foster Carers – A Guide to Allegations” was produced by Tusla Child and Family Agency in October 2025 and provided to all statutory and non-statutory foster care providers with the understanding that a copy of this booklet was to be given to each foster carer and discussed with them within one year from its implementation date. Monitors found that this booklet was distributed via email to each foster carer in the service of Origins Foster Care in November 2025 and again in March 2026. Monitors found that fostering link workers were in the process of raising and discussing this booklet with carers in their supervision meetings. A review of the questionnaires returned to monitors found that all six responding carers were familiar with the process should an allegation or complaint be made against them. In interviews with two foster carers, both responded that they understood the new process and had received the booklet.

Within the timeframe of the dataset for this monitoring visit, there were no allegations of abuse or neglect made against any foster carer contracted by the agency. There was one welfare concern against a foster carer. Monitors found that this concern was managed in line with the agency’s policies, Tusla protocols and relevant legislation.

In interview, the foster carer against whom the concern was raised, noted that they were informed of the process to be followed, were treated with dignity throughout and were kept updated to the point of closure. During and following the process they were offered supports

and stated that they were well supported by their fostering link worker stating that “Origins ...is good at coming back to you and keeping you updated”.

The DLP for the agency maintained a tracker to record all concerns and allegations with separate trackers for those subject to CASP and for those following the “Responding to Child Protection and Welfare Concerns” (November 2024) Tusla Child and Family Agency, protocol.

For the timeframe referenced in the dataset, there were no notifications of allegations or welfare concerns that warranted immediate notification to the Foster Care Committee (FCC) as per criteria set out in the amendment to the Policy, Procedure and Best Practice Guidance document made in March 2023.

#### Foster carer questionnaires and interviews

A total of six foster carer families completed and returned the questionnaire to the monitoring team. This represented a total of 15.8% of all active foster carer families in the agency. Carers were provided with an opportunity to reflect on their experience of being supported by the agency, their experience of training within the agency, the positives they experience from fostering as well as the challenges being a foster carer placed on them and their families. All foster carers stated that they were well supported by Origins Foster Care with one carer noting that “Origins afterhours care is amazing” and another stating that “[Fostering link worker] is trauma informed and always contactable”. Monitors found that foster carers had access to regular support and training and were provided with the information they needed to provide safe care for the children they cared for and for their families. A third carer stated in their questionnaire that “We get great support from Origins, they are brilliant at checking in and making sure that we are ok”. Both foster carers interviewed were equally complimentary of the support offered with one carer stating “We were new to fostering but we are fully supported through Origins....they want you to do well”.

## **2.2 Recommendations for service improvement**

- None identified.

## **2.3. Actions Required to be compliant with the standard**

- None identified.