



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

15th December 2017.

Ms. Margaret Falsey,
Committee Secretariat,
Committee of Public Accounts
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

Re: Ferryhouse School

Dear Ms. Falsey,

I refer to your correspondence dated 28th November 2017 and regret the delay in responding.

In response to the issues raised regarding Ferryhouse School at the Public Accounts Committee meeting of 16th November 2017, I attach herewith a briefing document which sets out the background to the school, current usage and planned developments.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Halpin', is written above a horizontal line.

Madeleine Halpin
General Manager



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	Recommendations	Update	Timeframe
6.3.3	Early intervention – Must ensure that supports or interventions that are put in place respond to those needs and are not merely generic or standardised response programmes	The Meitheal approach is Tusla's coordinated early intervention response to ensure children specific needs are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.	Completed
6.3.6	The Data Protection Acts, and the operationalization of those Acts by State agencies, should be reviewed in an appropriate way to ensure no legislative roadblock impedes child protection services sharing information relating to vulnerable children and their families	Tusla and the Garda are currently conducting a full review of information sharing requirements and barriers which will form the basis of a submission to the DCYA to support legislative change if required.	Report to be submitted to Minister in QTR 1 2018
6.3.12	Social workers from Tusla to be assigned to Garda Specialist Child Protection Units	A National Manager is currently being assigned to work within Gardai Senior Management to support the development of a model of joint working. Current work is focused on exploring the models of best practice in respect of co-location. This is an on-going piece of work which is dependent of multiple factors. Once a final model is agreed then a detailed project plan will be established to implement this model with the Irish context. Currently visits are taking place to models of practice in the US and the North of Ireland.	This work is on-going and a detailed timeframe will be developed once the agreed model of joint-working is confirmed.

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6.3.14

Any child who is the subject of a Section 12 should have a developmentally informed, culturally sensitive, comprehensive assessment that addresses his or her basic needs, his or her safety, barriers to effective parenting, the appropriate fit between the type of care needed and between caregiver and child. This assessment should address the child’s medical, educational, emotional and behavioural needs.

The assessment should of necessity be sensitive to the emotional trauma the child may have experienced as a result of being removed under the section and address the effects of separation from his or her family and the effects of disrupted attachments. In particular if a child, as a result of the section being invoked, has been placed in a different geographical location away from community, school and peer supports, the assessment should address as a matter or priority, how to return the child to his or her natural environment as a soon as is practicable.

An awareness of the likely traumatic impact of the predisposing factors that exist in the

1. SOS - All initial assessments will include an assessment of child’s needs and their safety and barriers to parenting (complicating factors). All assessment will consider the impact of parental behaviour on a child in respect of needs and the future danger children might be exposed to if the risk is on-going.
2. All children are subject to a care plan on reception into care after a S12 has been conducted and the child has not be returned to the care of his/her parents. A care plan considers all of the emotional, health, educational and care needs of a child and arrangement for contact with the family.
3. All cases will be subject to the Signs of Safety practice approach that seeks to explore the impact of parental behaviour on a child using various tools that will engage children in ensuring their voice has been given space, audience, voice and influence. All naturally occurring networks will be explored to ensure that children can live at home or love in the closest approximation to their home

Implementation of Signs of Safety has begun and will be on-going for the next 3 years.

All children received into care are required to have a care plan – completed. Tusla published performance metrics in respect of children in care with care plans

As above

	child's life prior to the section being invoked, together with a sensitivity of the likely impact on children who are removed under S12 should permeate all aspects of organisational functioning within AGS and Tusla	either through 4. Tusla therapists will provide multidisciplinary consultation, assessment and focused interventions and will support staff in this work with children and families. Therapists will work in clinic settings, in homes, in the community and in Family Centres taking into account the ecological context of service users lives.	
6.3.17	Legislative clarity is required to ensure that S56 of the Child and Family Act is broad enough to enable Tusla to contract with a private not-for-profit provider with respect to emergency placements under 12(4).	Pamela is there a timeline to action changes required here	
	Legislative clarity is required in respect of the statement that the placing of children in emergency situations with a private provider is not regarded as a fostering arrangement within the meaning of Section 36(1)(b)	Section 36(1)(b) allows Tusla to place a child who is in Tusla's care, following either a voluntary consent provided by a parent or a court order, in residential care. The key word here is "care" and in order to comply with section 36(1)(b) a child must first be in our care. Following a section 12 being invoked by An Garda Síochána the child is delivered up to the custody of Tusla but at the time and until we obtain an order or the parent consents, the child is not yet in our	Completed from Tusla perspective. Legislative amendment outside Tusla role but will inform our submission on the review of the Child Care Act 1991.



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		care but simply our custody and therefore a 36(1)(b) placement is not applicable. Therefore an arrangement under section 15 of the Child Care Act is applicable for this interim accommodation measure	
	The Foster Care Reg should be expressly referred to the contract with private providers		To be completed QTR 2 2018
	The legal framework applying to emergency placements with private providers should be clarified to remove any ambiguity as to the standards to be applied in respect of such placements, particularly in cases where children have emotional or behavioural problems		To be completed QTR 2 2018
	A social work service that is directly accessible to children or families at risk outside of office hours should be developed as a matter of priority to ensure a comprehensive and unified child protection system		Timeline from Aidan required

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