

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL124
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Name of Service:	Saimer Community Childcare Group Ltd
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Address of Service:	The Rock, Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F94 NH36
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Name of Registered Provider:	Emily Farrell Larkin
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	37
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Killeen
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable.
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Description of service

Saimer Community Childcare service is in the town of Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal. The preschool caters for children aged between 0 months and 6 years, from Monday to Friday between 8 am and 6 pm. This community operated preschool service offers the option of full daycare, part-time care service, an (ECCE) Early Childhood Care and Education and sessional care programme. A breakfast club from 8.00 am to 9.00 am and afterschool programme for school-aged children from 2.00pm to 6.00 pm is also offered. The service operates from a purpose-built facility with 5 childcare playrooms.

Staffing

There was thirty-eight staff members employed to work in the service twenty of which were present on the day of inspection. The thirty-eight staff members include a service manager, twenty-five staff employed to work directly with the children and four staff members employed on a CE scheme, two administration staff, two kitchen staff, one cleaner one maintenance worker and two staff are also employed to work with the after-school children. The register provider does not work in the service daily.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,16 l, j, k, 19,23,25, and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 l, j, k Record in relation to a preschool service.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)

The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service, a list of staff rooms, qualifications and position within each room was displayed on the notice board.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection.

The following vetting information was available for six adults:

(a) Eight written validated references from past employers for four of the adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for thirty-eight staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)

Four of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b) (d)

One staff member did not have the required International Child Protection Certificate available. It is acknowledged a basic disclosure was available for the staff member.

One adult employed on the Community employment scheme did not have the following on file,

- Identification
- CV
- References on file from previous employer or reputable source.
- It could not be established if one adult required international police vetting due to no CV available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) The staff member was instructed to apply for the International Child Protection Certificate urgently.

Introduced a strict pre-employment check: no staff member can begin regulated work without valid certification. Assigned responsibility to a designated staff member (e.g. Safeguarding Officer/HR) to monitor compliance. Set up automated reminders for certificate renewal and outstanding applications. Updated the organisations safeguarding policy to reinforce mandatory certification requirements. Conducted staff awareness/training sessions on safeguarding compliance and documentation.

(2) The required documents were in place and on file. However, the file was not clearly labelled (missing name tab), which led to it being overlooked during the check. The correct file was located and verified, confirming

compliance. The file was immediately labelled correctly with the staff member's name. All staff files were reviewed to ensure proper labelling and organisation.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) International Child protection certificate application form submitted. Updated safeguarding safe statement sent in for review.
- (2) Staff file sent into the inspectorate for review with all outstanding paperwork from day of inspection.

Summary Comment

The document submitted in relation to regulation 2 (d) remains outstanding until required International Child Protection Certificate had been submitted.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.
- (8) The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample review of attendance records.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

- (i) The registered provider demonstrated accurate records of the staff roster in place in the service.
- (j) A sample review of medication administration records reviewed since the last inspection evidenced that records included the reason for administration, the amount, witness and consent of parents.
- (k) A sample review of ten incident and accident records evidenced that after incidents and parents were informed and the form had been signed by management and staff involved.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

19 (a) (b)

BASIC NEEDS

- The service promoted healthy eating and food, and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. A three-week menu plan was available for review on the notice board. Children on the day of inspection were observed eating sausages, potatoes, carrots and gravy. An alternative of pasta was available for one child who requested an alternative. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriately to the age and stage of development. Children’s drinks were available in all the care rooms within their reach throughout the day, should they feel thirsty at any stage.
- Bibs and aprons were available to the children for messy play activities. Spare clothes were available if the children required a change of clothing during the day.
- On the day of inspection, it was cold and wet, children were observed utilising the outdoor area with wet gear, hats, gloves and wellies.
- The service has two dedicated sleep rooms. The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day by children sleeping at various intervals. Older pre-school children were observed sleeping on floor beds, while other children who did not want to sleep were offered an alternative activity in another room. For children who did not require a sleep, appropriate quiet rest facilities were available in the care room including child size couches, soft matting and cushions. children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day.
- Children in the baby and wobbler room were observed in energetic play with staff, throwing balls from the ball pit and staff retrieving them and giving them back. The staff were positioned on the floor with the children. The children were free to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up, learn to walk in a safe space with soft padding mats available if the child became unsteady. There was easy access to the outside area throughout the day, and children were observed playing outside on the day of inspection.
- The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours. One child who became upset as he wanted a bike another child had was supported by staff. They were observed getting down to his eye level and saying “lets share with our friends” they supported the children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment and materials.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

- During meals the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere. Staff held and interacted positively with children during bottle feeding. The

staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves.

- A key-worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for creating close relationships with a designated group of children and their parents.
- The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. The staff members in the baby room communicated positively with the babies using soft and gentle tones, offered reassurance by sitting near them on the floor as they explored and promptly comforted any child if they became upset.
- The staff in the care rooms supported the children to engage positively with one another and the children were encouraged to engage in play activities that required turn taking and sharing. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.
- A health promoting ethos was implemented in the service in relation to supporting the children's emotional well-being and emotional literacy. This was evidenced in the service on the day of inspection with the staff members heard encouraging the children to express how they were feeling at different times throughout the day. Age-appropriate books on feelings were available and were used to help pre-school children to recognise and to become aware of their emotions and how to manage them.
- Staff and parents work in partnership within the service. This was observed at drop off and collection with parents being given information on the child's day, food intake, sleep and personal care needs if applicable.
- Many children demonstrated a sense of pride in their success during the session and were observed calling on the staff members to share their achievements. The staff members readily acknowledged and encouraged the children's efforts and accomplishments, focusing on children's actions, interactions and play activities.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

- The indoor area consisted of five care rooms which were all in operation on the day of inspection. The rooms were bright and inviting and laid out to facilitate sensory experiences through arts and crafts and sand trays with accessories. Fine motor development was supported with the use of jigsaws, shape sorters, crayons, and paper to draw on. Gross motor development was supported with ride on toys and climbing equipment and an area to play ball outside.
- The Baby room was designed for comfort and sensory exploration, this room featured a large, adult armchair for staff to provide comfort and to feed the younger children. The floor space included soft, child-sized seating, a stimulating ball pit, and an assortment of age-appropriate toys specifically chosen to refine motor

skills. Stable props were available to support the learner walker, and a shatter proof mirror provided additional support to develop visual senses.

- The pre-school rooms had a range of play-based materials that offered stimulation, exploration, and imagination. These were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play, and movement. The materials included, Jenga blocks, zoo animals, ponies, cars, tractors, wooden furniture, and a wide selection of puzzles. The rooms had appropriate child-sized tables and chairs, a calm corner with soft teddies and a wooden playhouse, and a home kitchen area featuring a child-sized cooker, sink, and oven. There was a dedicated art area, a library corner, and a “My Family Tree” photo display to promote a sense of belonging.
- The children were observed to be happily engaged with a variety of different materials and equipment. Interest areas were spacious, uncluttered, and sufficiently resourced offering an adequate range of toys and materials. The Children’s artwork was displayed on the walls in all the care rooms.
- The outdoor play area provided an alternative change of environment for the children. The service had two outdoor play areas. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided in the fully enclosed outdoor play areas. To the front of the building featured two slides, six ride-on bikes, and a baby stroller. The larger outdoor space to the side of the service included twelve ride-on bikes, a soft absorbent floor surface, a large climbing frame with steps and a slide, a large elevated wooden treehouse, a plastic treehouse, and numerous small cars and trucks. These areas supported gross motor development, imaginative play, and exploration. children were observed engaging in energetic play on the all-weather synthetic grass surface which contained purposely designed mounds and tunnels as features to add interest and additional opportunities for physical activity.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The main entrance was found to be secured on arrival preventing unauthorized access or exit from the premises.
- The staircase was fitted with a low-level handrail for children’s use.

- Child stair gates were present in the hallway and the stairwell to prevent children from accessing the staircase unsupervised.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.
- Highchairs within the baby room were fitted with a 5-point safety harness and were in good state of repair.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall wooden fencing and a bolted gate.

Infection Control:

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Tables and highchairs were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in both care rooms.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, and liquid soap and paper towels.
- The sanitary facilities were observed to be ventilated by openable windows.
- Sanitary facilities were observed to be kept maintained and clean.
- Foot pedal bins were observed throughout the premises.

Administration of Medication:

- When interviewed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. Detailed care plans were in place for children who required them. The plans detailed the process to follow for staff to administer emergency medication and reviewed by parents and management. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had three designated sleep rooms with appropriate costs available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.
- The Sleep room temperature was recorded, within the acceptable on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- (1) In the baby room, it was noted that a fridge used to store anti-febrile medication. The medication was accessible to the preschool children, as no lock was on the fridge to restrict access.
- (2) A large sorting toy in the toddler room was broken and resulted in a shaper steel piece being exposed. This could cause injury to the preschool child.
- (3) The designated sleep room in the wobbler room was being used to store toys, child size furniture, and child size kitchen. Storage of these items in the sleep room can distract the children when they are trying to sleep.

Infection Control:

- (4) On the day of inspection, after nappy changing, the hands of the babies were observed to be not consistently washed, posing a risk of cross contamination. Gloves and aprons were observed not to be removed after disposing of an unclean nappy, and prior to moving onto the next care activity of placing on a clean nappy, followed with redressing the child. This could lead to a risk of cross infection.
- (5) Older Children did not routinely wash their hands after activities, before food or when they came back to room from playing outside.
- (6) A substantial accumulation of dust had formed on the mechanical ventilation fan in the nappy changing area and there was a strong malodor present in the room.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- (1) The medication was immediately removed and secured to prevent child access. Access to the fridge was restricted straight away. All medicines were immediately removed from the baby room fridge. Medications were relocated to a fridge in the staffroom, which is inaccessible to children. Access to medication is now restricted to authorised staff only. Staff were reminded of correct medication storage procedures
- (2) The toy was removed immediately from the room upon discovery. It was disposed of the next day into a skip. The area was checked for any loose or hazardous parts. Staff were informed of the issue and reminded to report damaged equipment promptly. The incident was recorded and reported to management. Introduced regular toy and equipment safety checks in all rooms. Implemented a system where damaged toys are removed immediately and reported. Maintained a log of equipment checks and replacements. Ensured only

age-appropriate, safe, and well-maintained toys are accessible to children. Assigned responsibility to a designated staff member i.e.: room leader, for routine safety inspections.

- (3) Established that the sleep room is to be used for rest only, with no storage of toys or equipment. Introduced regular room checks to ensure the sleep environment remains appropriate. Updated room-use guidance to ensure clear separation between play and rest areas. Provided staff guidance/training on creating and maintaining a suitable sleep environment. Assigned responsibility to a designated staff member i.e.: room leader, to monitor room setup daily.

Infection Control:

- (4) Staff were immediately reminded of correct nappy changing and hygiene procedures. Clear guidance was reinforced. A demonstration of proper procedure was provided where necessary. Increased supervision and monitoring of nappy changing routines was implemented. The incident was recorded and reported to management. Introduced/refreshed infection control and hygiene training for all staff. Displayed step-by-step nappy changing procedures in changing areas. Implemented regular hygiene audits and spot checks. Ensured adequate supplies of gloves, aprons, and handwashing materials are always available. Assigned responsibility to a designated staff room leader to monitor compliance daily.
- (5) Staff were reminded immediately of the importance of promoting hand hygiene at key times (after activities and around mealtimes). Children were supported and encouraged to wash hands routinely throughout the day. Handwashing routines were reintroduced and embedded into daily transitions (e.g. before meals, after play).
- (6) The ventilation fan was cleaned immediately to remove dust accumulation. The nappy changing area was deep cleaned and sanitised. The source of the malodour was identified and addressed. Staff were reminded of cleaning responsibilities and hygiene standards. Implemented regular deep cleaning of nappy changing areas. Added routine environmental hygiene checks to daily/weekly checklists. Ensured clear allocation of cleaning responsibilities to staff. Established monitoring and sign-off procedures for cleaning tasks.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) Photographic evidence of medication removed from unsecure fridge.
- (2) Broken toy was removed on the day of inspection.
- (3) Photographic evidence of toys removed from the sleep room.

Infection Control:

- (4) No evidence supplied.

- (5) No evidence supplied.
- (6) Photographic evidence of mechanical ventilation fan cleaned.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-
(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and
(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there was a person trained in first aid for children available to the preschool children during the operation of the service. Eight adults had in date certification of first aid for children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a)(b)
 While first aid kits were present on site, there was no evidence that regular inventory checks of their contents had been completed, as a result a lot of the contents in the first aid box had expired. The absence of these checks could lead to expired or missing items being relied on in the event of an emergency, therefore delaying or compromising the required first aid response to the child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) All first aid kits were immediately checked and restocked, removing expired items. Expired items were safely disposed of and replaced with current stock. Staff were reminded of the importance of regular checks and monitoring of first aid supplies. The issue was recorded and reported to management. All first aid kits were immediately checked and restocked, removing expired items. Expired items were safely disposed of and

replaced with current stock. Staff were reminded of the importance of regular checks and monitoring of first aid supplies.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Photographic evidence of new first aid supplies. First Aid checklist completed for 2026.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
- (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A procedure was in place to practice and record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated the 16 February 2026.
 - (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke detection system in the service was on file. Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment was dated 15th December 2025.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) was available and open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (4) On the day of inspection, a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were observed to be displayed in a conspicuous place within the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

The records for the smoke detection system indicated the last service occurred on 06 December 2024. This is not in line with the services requirements, which indicates that the system should be services annually.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) Although the service has been carried out, the service certificate has not yet been received due to required panel updates. Which have been carried out today the 02/04/2026. Implemented a tracking system for all service certificates to ensure documentation is received promptly. Assigned a designated staff member in the office to follow up with contractors on outstanding certificates. Scheduled verification checks to confirm all future services are documented with certificates immediately. Ensured all staff are aware of compliance requirements and the importance of keeping records up to date.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Fire Maintenance Cert sent in for review.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.