

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS149
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Name of Service:	Naíonra Chrónáin
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Address of Service:	Aras Chrónáin Ionad Cultúrtha, Bóthar an Úllorid, Cluain Dolcáin, Dublin 22,
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Eircode:	D22 X856
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Name of Registered Provider:	Meadhbh Ní Cheallaigh
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	25
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
Inspection undertaken by:	H Sutherland
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

Naíonra Chrónáin is a not-for-profit early years service located in Clondalkin Dublin 22 and operates out of two cabins on the grounds of Áras Chrónáin Irish Cultural Centre. The service provides sessional, education and care through the Irish language to children aged 2 to 6 years, Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 11:30pm and 12pm to 3pm. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is available to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There are currently five staff employed to work directly with the children including the person in charge. One adult is employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). On the day of inspection seven adults were present working directly with the children including two students on work placement programmes. The registered provider was not present on the day of inspection and does not work in the service.

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 and records. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 (1) (a-c), (2). (a-d), (3), (4) Management and recruitment

Regulation 11(1) (3) Staffing levels

Regulation 15 (1) (a-i) Record of pre-school child
 Regulation 19 (1) (b) Health welfare and development of child.
 Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child
 Regulation 26 (1), (a)(b), (2)(c), (4) Fire safety measures

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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspector arrived unannounced at the service. A review of the staff roster showed that a designated person is on the premises at all times during the opening hours of the service.
 - (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own roles and responsibilities.
- (2) Following discussion with the person in charge it was confirmed that one adult commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on 25 April 2023. Documentation required under Regulation 9 (2)(3)(4) was reviewed in respect of the adult and the requirements of 9 (2)(3) was reviewed in respect of the adults on placement as detailed below. The requirements of Regulation 9(2)(c) relating to Garda Vetting were reviewed for all adults.
- (a) One written and verified reference was available from a past employer.
 - (b) Four written and verified references were available from sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for seven adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years.

(d) Not required

(4) Documentation was available to show that the adult employed to work directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had not been carried out prior to two adults commencing work in the service as detailed below:

- Documentary evidence available indicated that one adult did not have the second reference validated before they commenced employment.
- One adult did not have a second verified reference prior to commencing work in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Validated references have been obtained, and the service has updated its policy to ensure all references are validated and checked before an adult commencing work in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation received

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (3) has been adequately addressed.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs. There were 5 adults available to 31 children in the morning and 5 adults available to 25 children in the afternoon.
- The two adults on the work placement programme were also present during the morning and afternoon sessions.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

A sample of eight children's files were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.

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-

(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

Appropriate care practices that promoted the welfare, independence and wellbeing of children attending the service were observed during the inspection. Interactions between staff and children were observed to be warm, responsive and respectful to children's individual needs. Staff were observed engaging with children in a calm supportive manner and children were observed to make choices and express themselves freely. A rolling lunch routine was implemented effectively supporting children's independence, choice and decision-making skills. Once the lunchroom was open, children were observed entering at times that suited their individual routines. They independently retrieved their lunch, which was provided by the parents, sat with their peers and engaged in conversation throughout the meal. Staff were present to provide support where needed but children were observed to confidently lead and manage the transition themselves. Drinking water was available and accessible to the children for the duration of the inspection.

Staff reported that the service had engaged with Better Start to support quality development. The curriculum was play based and children were observed initiating their own play and leading their own learning experiences across a variety of play areas. A free flow system was in operation enabling children to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environments. This approach supported children's physical development, exploration and sense of agency. Throughout the inspection children appeared content and engaged and their language development was promoted through conversation and songs in Irish and English. Rest areas with child size sofas were available both indoors and outdoors allowing children to rest or relax as needed.

Staff reported that the service uses an app to communicate with parents, keeping them informed about their children's daily experiences. The service hosted a 'Stay and Play' day, during which parents were invited to spend time with their children in the preschool environment. Opportunities were also provided for parents to discuss key aspects of their child's day at drop off or collection.

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 service was adequately secured with high gates to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and unauthorised access.
- Cleaning products and medication were stored out of reach of children.
- A shock-absorbing surface was installed under the climbing frame in the outdoor area.
- Care plans were available for two children with medical conditions that may require emergency medication.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use throughout the service for example, in bathrooms and the care rooms.
- Liquid soap, warm running water and single use paper towels were available and accessible to children.
- Effective hand washing was observed to control the spread of infection. For example, children were supported to wash their hands after using the toilet and before meals.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were unobstructed for the duration of the inspection.
- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The inspector observed that children's lunches were not checked to ensure grapes were halved. Two children were found to have whole grapes in their lunch boxes which posed a serious risk to the children's safety.
2. A blind in the small cabin was observed to be damaged with a piece of hanging wood protruding from the bottom of the blind posing a risk to children's safety.

Infection Control:

3. A fabric child size sofa was observed to be heavily stained and torn exposing the inner foam. The exposed tear posed an infection control risk, as the surface cannot be effectively cleaned or sanitised.

- The area around the sink and soap dispenser in the small cabin was not adequately cleaned. In addition, the insulation surrounding a wooden box under the sink was observed to be torn and coming away from the surface preventing the area from being cleaned thoroughly.

Administration of Medication:

- Although there was a care plan available, it was evident following discussions with the inspector that two staff members were not aware of the procedure to follow in the event of an emergency for one child with a serious medical condition. This poses a risk to the child's safety, as staff must be fully informed on how to respond appropriately in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- A meeting was held with the staff, and a lunchtime procedure was agreed, whereby team members on duty in the lunchroom will be extra vigilant with the contents of children's lunch boxes.
- The wood has been removed, and a new blind as been ordered. Weekly inspections of the rooms will be carried out to identify any repairs required.

Infection Control:

- The sofa was removed and a new sofa was purchased.
- The sink and soap dispenser were cleaned, and the insulation was replaced. A weekly inspection of the area will be carried out to identify any repairs required.

Administration of Medication:

- A meeting was held with the team on the 17 October 2025 to discuss the procedure relating to the care plan for the child with the serious medical condition. Additionally, refresher training on care plans will be carried out annually.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Supporting documentation received

Infection Control:

Supporting documentation received

Administration of Medication:

Supporting documentation received

Summary Comment

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

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 written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill took place on 30 September 2025. In addition, there was evidence to show that practice fire drills are carried out during the morning and afternoon sessions.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was up to date. Fire extinguishers were serviced on 21 November 2024 and smoke alarms were serviced on 22 January 2025.
- (2)
- (a) The above records were open to review by the inspector.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the kitchen area in the large cabin and next to the door in the small cabin.