

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL118
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Name of Service:	Home from Home Creche
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Address of Service:	Hampton lane, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K32 N819
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Name of Registered Provider:	Danielle Cawley, Rachel Cawley
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	02/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	46
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford and Á Dunne
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Home from Home is a privately owned early years service conducted from a detached single storey barn conversion located close to the village of Balrothery in north Co Dublin. The service provides full day, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children from 6 months to 6 years and provides care to school aged children. The service consists of 6 care rooms, 5 of which are used for the early years children and are the Baby room, Wobbler room, Toddler room, Preschool room 1 and Preschool room 2. The children attending the school age service are accommodated in the Afterschool room. The service is registered to operate from 7:15am to 6:30 pm Monday to Friday but is currently operating from 7:30am to 6.00pm daily.

Staffing

The service employs 19 staff members to include the 2 registered providers, 1 of which is not routinely in the service, a designated person in charge, a cook and 15 childcare staff.

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 9,11,19,23,25 and 29. However, an additional non-compliance was identified under Regulation 16. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19, 23 and 29. As result, the scope of the inspection included the Baby room, Wobbler room, Toddler room and Preschool room 1 and did not include Preschool room 2.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the two registered providers, 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)(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.
- (c) A clear management structure was evident in the service and staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities

(2) The files of 19 staff members employed in the service were reviewed. Garda vetting disclosures for all staff were also reviewed.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

(a) Twenty-two validated written references were available from a past employer.

(b) Sixteen validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 19 staff members employed in the service. However, the service had not adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for one staff member. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available from 7 countries in respect of 6 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Fourteen staff members who work directly with the early years children had documentary evidence of at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Three staff members who work directly with the early years children did not have documentary evidence of at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(4) In response to the non-compliances the service has stated that, one staff member is awaiting confirmation from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality regarding their current level 5 qualification, in the interim they have moved this staff to school age room. The second staff member has gone back to college, and another staff member is now in this room. The remaining staff member is awaiting certificate of qualification. Going forward we will be ensuring all paperwork and letters from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality are present prior to commencement in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

(4) Evidence of one staff member end of semester examination results.

Summary Comment

Following completion of the corrective and preventive action process evidence of childcare care qualifications for three staff members remains outstanding. However, the registered providers have given the assurances that the three staff members will not be working with the early years children while they await confirmation of qualifications and completion of final examinations.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times

Compliance Information

(2) During the inspection there were 12 adults working directly with 52 children aged between 1 to 6 years in the morning and 11 adults working with 46 children in the afternoon.

- Baby room- 2 adults working with 6 children aged from 1-2 years of age in the morning and in the afternoon.
- Wobbler room- 2 adults working with 10 children aged from 1-3 years of age in the morning and afternoon.
- Toddler room- 2 adults working with 8 children aged from 2-3 years of age in the morning and in the afternoon.
- Preschool 1 room-3 adults working with 13 children aged from 2-4 years of age in the morning and 11 children in the afternoon.
- Preschool 2 room-2 adults working with 15 children aged from 3-4 years of age in the morning and 11 children in the afternoon.

(8)(a) On review of the service roster and on discussion with staff two adults were on the premises during the operation of the service.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(h) The details of each child's attendance in the service were completed by staff either on an electronic tablet and roll book.

(3) The records as referred to in part (1) were available to the inspectors on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(i) The service roster available on inspection did not reflect the staff members present in the service on the day of inspection. For example.

- A staff member that was present in the service from 10am was not recorded as working in the service on the week of 1-5 December 2025.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(i) In response the service has stated that rosters are updated as changes happen in written format, staff are aware to check for updates on roster in staff room as everything is noted here.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(i) Roster from the 19-23 January 2026.

Summary Comment

The registered providers have addressed the non-compliance as identified.

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

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service with meals and snacks served at regular intervals with additional and alternative food at mealtimes made available to the children if required. Drinking water was freely available to the children throughout the session. A breakfast of cereal and milk was provided, a morning snack of toast, butter and milk at 10am, a hot meal of potato, peas, fish fingers and gravy at 11.15am, a snack of fruit cheese and crackers at 1.15pm followed by an evening tea of potato, vegetables and gravy at 3.15pm.
- The children were observed to move freely in the care rooms while exploring their environment.
- Transitions between activities were managed calmly and in an organised manner with staff giving the children clear and concise instructions. Older children were supported to use the toilet independently.

Physical and material environment

- Defined areas of interest were available in Preschool room 1 which facilitated choice and child-led play. The materials and resources available provided challenging, creative and enriching experiences for the children.
- Each room had age-appropriate low-level table and chairs. Highchairs were provided in the Baby room and Wobbler room.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff in the care rooms engaged with parents daily through verbal conversation at drop off, collection and updated them on their child's meals, snacks, sleeping, nappy changes and activities undertaken.
- Staff encouraged the children to interact with each other in a calm and friendly manner while emphasising turn taking and sharing.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

1. The children in the Baby and Wobbler rooms did not engage in outdoor play on the day of inspection. On discussion with staff, they confirmed that outdoor play is not prioritised with the children when the weather is wet. The routine of the Baby room did not document time in the daily schedule for children to enjoy outdoor play. Outdoor play is required daily to enable the children to explore and develop their skills of walking, climbing and playing.
2. Staff in the Baby room did not encourage the children to remove their soothers when they were settled and playing in the care room. This reduced the effective development of the children oral motor skills and speech.
3. Following sleep time in the Baby room children only had their nappies changed if they were soiled. Children require regular nappy changes to maintain their needs for comfort and hygiene.
4. Staff in the Baby room did not always prioritise the needs of the children in the room as follows:
 - From 11:13-11:19am a staff member spent time completing records on the electronic tablet rather than comfort a child that was upset. While it is acknowledged that records are required to be maintained and updated, it is important that children that are upset are given comfort and reassurance when needed.
 - At the start of dinner time, a staff member focused on the tidying of toys rather than supporting three children in highchairs ready to eat their meal

Physical and Material Environment:

5. The layout and materials available in the Baby, Wobbler and Toddler rooms did not promote a child led, engaging and explorative environment for the children. For example:
 - In the Baby room:
 - there was no sensory equipment to enable the children to independently explore and discover alternative textures and surfaces.
 - suitable tables and chairs were not accessible to the children available to support tabletop activities despite the children being of an age and stage of development to enjoy sitting at the table available for an activity.
 - the play kitchen was not suitable for the age of the children in the room.

- In the Wobbler and Toddler rooms designated areas of interest were poorly resourced with supporting equipment with boxes of materials stored with sealed lids not accessible for the children to open.

6. The large fully enclosed outdoor area located to the rear of the service was not equipped with toys and materials to enable the Baby and Wobbler rooms to enjoy the space throughout the year.

Supporting Relationships around children

7. The family walls that support children's sense of identity and belonging were displayed higher than children's eye level in the Wobbler and Toddler room. The Baby room did not have any evidence of a family wall for the children to engage with.

Programme of Activities:

8. On discussion with staff in the Baby room it was confirmed that daily activities such as playdough, painting, glueing, drawing and sensory play was not routinely carried out in the care room and one construction activity of magnetics which the children showed interest in only had five pieces available for six babies. Children require introduction and exposure to activities that enable them to develop interests and fun experiences while attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Basic Needs:

1. In response the service has stated that staff have been advised that children must be brought outside for outdoor play, there is no reason not to as space is available, and all children have outer gear/boots. This must be included in their weekly curriculum.
2. In response staff have been advised that soothers are only to be used as soothing comfort not outside of this requirement. They are removed after arrival / nap times once child is content and stored in sterilised container while not in use. Spot checks on this are being carried out frequently to ensure it continues appropriately.
3. In response staff were advised nappies are to be changed whether wet or soiled once they awake from naps, this is best practice and should be followed daily.

4. In response staff were advised priority of the child is paramount and correspondence on the electronic application must be seen as secondary to the child's needs. Cleaning of toys can be completed after child goes for their nap. When dinners arrive in room, that must be served straight away to a child. Children are not to be left waiting for their dinner. Continuous checks will be completed in rooms to ensure children are prioritised

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Physical and Material Environment

5. In response the registered providers have stated that sensory equipment has been added to the Baby room along with new tables and chairs to suit the developmental stage requirements of the children. Play kitchen was repositioned to give easier access for children.

The Wobbler/Toddler Rooms have been redone to ensure more accurate areas of interest and ensuring appropriate toys are in the co ordinating areas with no lids on boxes restricting access for children.

The supervisor will check these weekly to ensure this is kept in place.

6. Outdoor equipment now in garden and additional equipment to be brought in in the coming months especially as outdoor play will continue to increase. Staff advised outdoor area is available to all children, younger children can use sand area / smaller climbing frames and swings. Ongoing monitoring will be done to ensure it continues. Signage removed to ensure access is for all age groups/ room groups in outdoor area.

Supporting Relationships around children

7. Family wall pics have been moved down the wall to offer easier access for children to take pics off. Continuous checks ensuring family walls stay lower on wall to offer easier access to children. All staff have been made aware of this, and all rooms are now compliant on this issue.

Programme of Activities

8. Additional equipment purchased for the rooms, ensuring more choice of textures / sensory in all rooms. Continuous checks in the room to monitor equipment is readily available to all children and any replacements required can be sourced and implemented.

Supporting documentation submitted

Basic Needs:

1. Revised daily curriculum.
2. Corrective action.

3. Nappy procedure and evidence of staff training.

4. Corrective action.

Physical and Material Environment

5. Photograph evidence and revised daily curriculum.

6. Photographic evidence of outdoor area

Supporting Relationships around children

7. Picture attached and corrective action.

Programme of Activities

8. Corrective action.

Summary Comment

Following completion of the corrective and preventive action process the registered providers have given assurances that the non-compliances identified on inspection have been adequately addressed. The non-compliances will be reviewed on the next inspection of the service.

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:

- Entrances were secured to prevent unauthorised access and children leaving unsupervised. Exits were kept clear for the safe evacuation of children in the event of an emergency.

Infection Control:

- Warm water and liquid soap and were available at the wash hand basins in the sanitary facilities in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting disclosures that were available for one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

2. There was evidence to demonstrate that regular and routine risk assessments were not completed by staff in the care rooms or main areas of the service to reduce the potential risk of injury to a child. For example.

- The surface temperature of wall mounted radiators in the Toddler room and main hallway exceeded the recommended temperature of 50 °C. Toddler room radiator read 61.4 °C at 10:33am. Staff in the care room were made of the potential risk of scalding and took actions to ensure that a child could not access the radiator. Main hallway radiator read 53.4 °C at 3.36pm.
- In the main hallway of the service three trailing flexes were accessible to the children and created a potential risk of strangulation.

3. Two mattress covers used by children in the Baby room did not have safety labels to ensure they met the minimum required safety standard for use.

4. A child from Preschool 2 room was observed accessing the sanitary facility independently and without adult supervision at 11.28am. The child had access to antiseptic creams and lotions which the potential risk of ingestion.

Infection Control:

5. The procedures and practice of handwashing and reducing the potential risk of cross infection were observed to be at variance with the service policy and best practice guidelines. For example.

- The children in the Baby and Wobbler rooms did not have their hands washed before dinner.
- Children in the Pre School 1 room had access and use of one cloth towel for hand drying.
- Staff in the Baby room did not complete nappy changing as per the service policy or best practice guidelines. For example, staff did not always use an apron when changing nappies and neither the staff member nor the child washed their hands after the process.
- Soothers which two children who were using and playing with while having their nappies changed in the nappy changing room, were not sterilised on return to the playroom.
- Children who attended the bathroom alone did not wash their hands after the toilet visit.
- Bins in use within the nappy changing area, Toddler room, Preschool 1 room and in the outdoor area were not pedal operated and therefore increased the risk of cross infection.
- At sleep time in the Toddler room the low beds used by children were not a minimum of 50cm apart to reduce the potential risk of cross infection.
- The rolls of paper in the sanitary facility were stored loosely on worktops and were subjected to repeated handling.

Safe Sleep:

6. The procedures and practices relating to safe sleep observed in the service were not in line with best practice guidelines. For example.

- Staff in the Baby, Wobbler and Toddler room did not record the temperature of the care rooms while children slept to ensure it was maintained between 16-20°C for under 1-year olds and 18-22°C for over 1-year olds.
- The service policy on safe sleep did not outline that sleep checks should be completed every 10 minutes on all sleeping children.
- Staff in the Baby room did not ensure that 10-minute checks were physically completed on all children that slept and recording of the 10 mins checks were not completed accurately and in a timely manner, this can lead to an error in recording accurate information and present risk to children's safety during sleep.
- A child from the Wobbler room was positioned to sleep in a cot located beside a radiator.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. In response the staff member received renewed Garda Vetting. Staff vetting will be reviewed every January to ensure all is in place for the coming year and note those who are due to expire and proceed with a vetting application.
2. In response to the non-compliances the service has stated the following.
 - Heat checks put in place for all rooms and general areas. Radiator covers purchased to be mounted on wall ensuring risk is reduced to children as they will be less accessible. All radiators to have covers ensuring no risk in any room going forward.
 - Flexes were taped up. Ensure all lights are tape up over doorway or not put up if risk assessment proves they are a high risk.
3. To address new mattresses and covers were purchased and old ones removed. Ensure all mattresses have appropriate safety labels in place prior to purchasing.
4. Staff to ensure all children are supervised in toilet/nappy changing area. All staff will ensure continuous supervision of children from preschool rooms in the toilet area to ensure they are no risks to them.

Infection Control:

5. In response to the identified non compliances the registered providers have stated the following.

- Handwashing procedures are in place and must be followed. There will be continuous supervision that this is being followed.
- Hand towel to be removed after specific child is finished with it.
- Ensure adequate paper towels are in each room for all children.
- All staff had to reread nappy changing policy, ensure staff reread all polices more frequently to keep up with procedures. Spot checks carried out regularly for nappy changing and handwashing.
- Staff to ensure soothers are not brought to nappy changing area, if required, must be sterilised on return however best practice is not to bring soother to the area.
- Staff to supervise children using toilet area, to ensure hand washing is completed by child with the encouragement of staff.
- Ensure all bins are checked and replaced if pedal is not in working order to reduce cross contamination
Ensure checks of toddler room beds regularly to minimise any cross over and reduction in infections.
- Ensure paper rolls are within dispenser in sanitary area reducing hand contact of persons.

Safe Sleep:

6. In response to the identified non compliances the registered providers have stated the following.

- Safe sleep check updated to record temp of room, new sleep checks used with temp check effective immediately from initial inspection.
- Policy has been updated to clearly state checks every 10 minutes. Staff to reread the revised service policy.
- Spoke to staff on the importance of accurately doing sleep checks and recording correctly
Staff have been made aware to prioritise sleep checks for the safety of all children, children must be physically and visually checked individually and recorded correctly.
- Checks on recording and physical checks continuously being observed to ensure best practice is always in place for wellbeing of child.
- Staff have been updated on cot space requirements as per best practice. We will carry out continuous checks to ensure space and any safety issues are dealt with.
- Wobbler room cot has been removed further away from the radiator.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Garda Vetting
2. Photographic evidence.
3. Photographic evidence
4. Staff retraining on service policy.

Infection Control:

5. Please see nappy procedure, pictures of bins. Staff retraining on service policy and template for ensuring hand towels replaced.

Safe Sleep:

6. Service revised safe sleep policy and staff retraining on service policy.

Summary Comment

Following completion of the corrective and preventive action process the registered providers have given assurances that the non-compliances identified on inspection have been adequately addressed. The non-compliances will be reviewed on the next inspection of the service.

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

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid box was suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On review of the service roster it was observed that a staff member with First Aid Responder (FAR) training was not available to the children attending the pre-school service from 7:30-8:15am on the day of inspection. It is acknowledged that a staff member with paediatric first aid was available to the children at this time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) In response the registered providers have stated that the non-compliance has been rectified and a staff member with FAR will be available to the children during the operation of the service. An additional staff member will be trained In FAR as the 3rd person on site.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Copy of roster and email enquiry regarding FAR training.

Summary Comment

Following completion of the corrective and preventive action process the registered providers have given assurances that the non-compliance identified on inspection have been adequately addressed. The non-compliance will be reviewed on the next inspection of the service.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(d) The non compliances identified on the last inspection have been addressed by the registered providers.