

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

Inspection Report

Foster Care Group Wales CYF
Pro-Copy Business Centre
Parc Ty Glas
Llanishen
Cardiff
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Summary

About the service

Foster Care Group Wales is registered as an Independent Fostering Agency. The registered provider is Foster Care Group Wales Ltd; the Responsible Individual is Dawn French and the Registered Manager was Ben McQuillan; though he left the agency on 31 March 2015 to take up a new position.

At the time the inspection there were approximately 55 approved fostering households, providing placements for about 70 children.

What type of inspection was carried out?

This was a baseline inspection and included the following methodology;

- review of the statement of purpose, quality of care report and other records
- consultation with foster carers, Social Workers and managers and
- consideration of concerns raised with the CSSIW

What does the service do well?

Evidence indicated that examples of good practice included;

- the retention of an experienced group of carers, staff and managers
- comprehensive systems for matching, placement making and for monitoring children's progress
- for assessing, supporting and developing the expertise of foster carers

Overall, evidence indicated that the objective of the agency, 'to ensure good outcomes for children by providing carefully matched foster placements, where they can enjoy stability and security', had been met.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Improvements had been made to the systems for;

- placement making and matching
- consulting with and monitoring the progress of the children and
- monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of their care
- ensuring staff adherence to procedures
- obtaining Care Plans and Placement Agreements
- obtaining feedback from local authorities to inform foster carer reviews and the quality of care review
- foster carer assessments and their scrutiny by panel and
- the appointment of a new training and quality assurance manager

What needs to be done to improve the service?

The following recommendations are made to support the ongoing improvement of the agency;

- the contact details for the provision of an independent advocacy service needed updating in the children's handbook

Quality Of Life

We (the CSSIW) met with a group of foster carers who contributed to the inspection.

They said that systems for matching and placement making were well developed and that there had been very few placement disruptions. They felt that placement sustainability was a particular strength of the agency. They demonstrated a child focused approach that recognised the developmental support needs of the children, as well as the implications of their earlier life experiences.

In addition to the children's handbooks provided by the agency, carers had compiled letters to welcome the children and to tell them about themselves and their lifestyles. The handbooks were available for teenagers and for younger children and provided a useful range of information, though the contact details for the provider of independent advocacy services needed updating.

Managers said that progress had been made since the last inspection in obtaining children's care plans and placement agreements and for consulting with them and monitoring their developmental progress. Children had been routinely spoken with during foster carer support visits; to enquire about their welfare and their views about their placement. The fostering Social Workers had completed reports to monitor the children's progress, that were seen to reflect their individual support needs and the progress they had made. These generally represented good practice but did not include the comments made by the children. The manager said the reports would include this information in the future and confirmed that their feedback was included in other forms of consultation; including those to inform the review of their care plans and their carer's approval.

The agency had implemented its own placement plans to supplement those provided by local authorities. These were to improve clarity about the support and developmental objectives to be met on behalf of the children and were subject to ongoing review. Risk assessments and safe care policies were also seen to be in place. Additional documentation was in place in respect of parent and child placements and in particular, to clarify the respective responsibilities of the foster carer and the parent/s of the children and for consultation with them. It was confirmed that no other children were placed alongside parent and child placements and that carers received specific training when providing such placements.

The agency's quality of care review stated; that all but one of the children was attending an educational placement and an alternative placement was being arranged for the one child that had been excluded. It showed that two children had received good GCSE results; one was attending college and that feedback from responsible local authorities was consistently positive about the progress of the children and the care they had received. Feedback from the children showed that their views had been sought and that they were very positive about the quality of their care.

Overall, evidence indicated that the agency and its carers were committed to improving the lives of the children and that they had received the support they needed to achieve good outcomes.

Quality Of Staffing

All Social Work staff employed by the agency were suitably qualified and experienced.

In addition to the fostering Social Workers, there was a dedicated placements team to oversee referrals and the matching of children with carers. The staff said that suitable staffing levels had been maintained since the last inspection and that caseloads were managed to enable them to provide good support to the carers and to maintain good standards of professional practice. They said they had received robust support from their managers, in general and in relation to their continuing professional development. This included the agency's 'placements coordinator' who was being supported to undertake a Social Work qualification. The team said they had worked very well together; that communication was effective and that staff motivation was high. They indicated they were entirely contented in their positions and with the support they received from their managers.

Feedback from foster carers about the support they received from their Social Workers was very good. This included general support and out of hours support. One made reference to their fostering Social Worker coming to support them at 4am when they had taken a child to hospital and the others said this would be typical of the support they had come to expect.

The managers said that the constitution of the fostering panel complied with regulations and that its proceedings had only taken place when quorate. A new and experienced panel chair had recently been appointed and managers felt this would support the ongoing improvement of the functions of the fostering panel. The panel was not attended.

Overall, evidence indicated the quality of staffing was very good.

Quality Of Leadership and Management

The registered manager had managed the agency since April 2013 and confirmed that they had completed the necessary management qualification. They had been supported by a 'practice manager' who was responsible for overseeing the day to day practice and the supervision of the Social Work team.

The registered manager left the agency on 31 March 2015 and the existing 'practice manager' had been appointed to replace them. A new quality assurance and training manager was due to start in May 2015 and their role was to support the ongoing improvement and development of the agency.

The managers said that a number of improvements had been made, including those recommended at the last inspection. These included the systems for;

- placement making and matching
- consulting with and monitoring the progress of the children
- monitoring, reviewing and improving the quality of care of the children
- ensuring staff adherence to agreed procedures
- obtaining Care Plans and Foster Placement Agreements
- obtaining feedback from local authorities to inform foster carer reviews and the quality of care review
- undertaking foster carer assessments and their scrutiny by panel

The quality of care review process was well developed and included feedback from children and other stakeholders and detailed plans for the ongoing improvement of the service. The 2014 report included the improvements that had been made since the last inspection and provided good analysis of the various aspects of the service. It included information about children's education as recommended at the last inspection and indicated that their attendance and achievements had been good. The report reflected transparency and a commitment to the ongoing improvement of the agency and is available upon request, where appropriate, from the agency.

Feedback about managers, from carers and staff indicated their support for them and for their expectation that the agency provided high standards of foster care was very good. The statement of purpose provided clear information about the operation and resourcing of the agency, including its aims and objectives.

Concerns had been raised with the CSSIW which were considered within the methodology employed during the inspection.

Overall, evidence indicated that the approach of managers had demonstrated transparency in addressing any concerns and a commitment to the ongoing improvement of the service.



Quality Of The Carers

The foster carers we met demonstrated a commitment to meeting the individual needs of the children and to the agency. They were an experienced group of carers and many of them had been with the agency since it was first registered.

They said the support and training they had received was excellent, in general and in relation to any particular placements they provided such as for parents and children or for children with a disability. This included safeguarding training and they made particular reference to the insight they had gained from training provided by a young person who had shared with them their own experience of being 'looked after'. They conveyed a good understanding of the circumstances of the children they cared for and the risks associated with some of them.

Foster carers had also received training in life journey work and created memory boxes for the children. They also set up savings schemes to be given to them when they left their placements.

Managers said that all foster carers had received at least one unannounced visit by their supervising Social Workers and that all of their reviews had been undertaken. They recognised the particular value of unannounced visits and records were seen to confirm they had been undertaken.

All feedback seen from the children and their case responsible Social Workers was very positive.

Overall, evidence indicated that the quality of foster care provided had been very good.

How we inspect and report on services

We conduct two types of inspection; baseline and focussed. Both consider the experience of people using services.

- **Baseline inspections** assess whether the registration of a service is justified and whether the conditions of registration are appropriate. For most services, we carry out these inspections every three years. Exceptions are registered child minders, out of school care, sessional care, crèches and open access provision, which are every four years.

At these inspections we check whether the service has a clear, effective Statement of Purpose and whether the service delivers on the commitments set out in its Statement of Purpose. In assessing whether registration is justified inspectors check that the service can demonstrate a history of compliance with regulations.

- **Focused inspections** consider the experience of people using services and we will look at compliance with regulations when poor outcomes for people using services are identified. We carry out these inspections in between baseline inspections. Focussed inspections will always consider the quality of life of people using services and may look at other areas.

Baseline and focused inspections may be scheduled or carried out in response to concerns.

Inspectors use a variety of methods to gather information during inspections. These may include;

- Talking with people who use services and their representatives
- Talking to staff and the manager
- Looking at documentation
- Observation of staff interactions with people and of the environment
- Comments made within questionnaires returned from people who use services, staff and health and social care professionals

We inspect and report our findings under 'Quality Themes'. Those relevant to each type of service are referred to within our inspection reports.

Further information about what we do can be found in our leaflet 'Improving Care and Social Services in Wales'. You can download this from our website, [Improving Care and Social Services in Wales](#) or ask us to send you a copy by telephoning your local CSSIW regional office.