

# Care service inspection report

## Fostering Relations Ltd

### Fostering Service

Dalgety Bay Business Centre

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Telephone: 01383 828245

Type of inspection: Unannounced

Inspection completed on: 27 June 2014



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**Service provided by:**

Fostering Relations Ltd

**Service provider number:**

SP2007008983

**Care service number:**

CS2007145923

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## Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

### We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	4	Good
Quality of Staffing	4	Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	4	Good

### What the service does well

Children and young people are carefully matched with foster carers. Overall, we found sustained permanent placements supported by skilled foster carers and staff.

Foster carers used their learning from training to more effectively look after children and young people.

Staff had very good training opportunities and received regular supervision, which they found supportive. There were opportunities for informal support within the close staff team.

The service had good quality assurance systems in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the service.

### What the service could do better

Stakeholders should be provided with more opportunity to develop and improve the quality of the service. Although we saw that children and young people placed with foster carers did have their views listened to, and had begun to access the newly developed children's area of the service website, we thought that more could be done to encourage their involvement in improving staffing and management and leadership.

## **What the service has done since the last inspection**

Since our last Inspection, the company has been subject to an acquisition of shares. This has resulted in a significant change of management and leadership. Communication about changes has been carefully managed for foster carers and staff who have had support to adjust to new management, staff changes and being part of a large provider group.

## **Conclusion**

Fostering Relations Ltd are committed to providing high quality foster care. Overall, we found that the outcomes for children, young people and foster carers were very good. Some areas of development identified at the last inspection had not yet been sufficiently progressed and this has impacted on some of the grades awarded. Since our last inspection, the service had focused on managing change and giving priority to supporting and communicating with carers and staff.

# 1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

This service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

## Requirements and recommendations

If we are concerned about some aspect of a service, or think it could do more to improve, we may make a recommendation or requirement.

- **A recommendation** is a statement that sets out actions the care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service, but where failure to do so will not directly result in enforcement. Recommendations are based on the National Care Standards, relevant codes of practice and recognised good practice.
- **A requirement** is a statement which sets out what is required of a care service to comply with the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 and Regulations or Orders made under the Act or a condition of registration. Where there are breaches of Regulations, Orders or Conditions, a requirement must be made. Requirements are legally enforceable at the discretion of the Care Inspectorate.

Fostering Relations is an independent company whose aims and objectives have been clearly laid out within the context of the relevant legislation. The service seeks to provide an integrated family placement service to Local Authorities for children and young people who require a supported alternative to living at home. The service aims to provide high standards of recruitment, selection, training and support to foster carers to enable them to be well equipped to meet the needs of children and young people placed. It recognises the need for not only a placement with a substitute family, but for that placement to achieve the desired outcome of the child's plan, whether that is rehabilitation, permanence or moving to independence.

At the time of our inspection visit, 30 foster carers were being supported to care for 36 children and young people.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

**Quality of Care and Support - Grade 4 - Good**

**Quality of Staffing - Grade 4 - Good**

**Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 4 - Good**

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com) or by calling us on 0345 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

## 2 How we inspected this service

### The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

### What we did during the inspection

We wrote this report following a short notice announced inspection. The inspection took place between Friday, 6 June 2014 and Friday, 27 June 2014.

As part of the inspection, we took account of the completed annual return and self assessment forms that we asked the provider to submit to us.

During this inspection, we sampled information from various sources, including the following:

- Discussion with managers and staff members
- Two individual foster families in their homes and discussion with a foster carers by telephone
- Discussion and observations of two children/young people who were being looked after by foster carers
- Independent panel members
- Agency Decision Maker
- Web designer contracted to develop the website
- Human Resources personnel.

We looked at:

- Foster carer files
- Children/young people's files
- The foster carers handbook
- Foster carer newsletters
- Records kept about a range of meetings and practices
- Records relating to service development work
- Questionnaires returned to us by staff.

We attended and observed a foster carer review panel.

### **Grading the service against quality themes and statements**

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

### **Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)**

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

### **Fire safety issues**

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at [www.firelawscotland.org](http://www.firelawscotland.org)



## **What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at our last inspection**

There were no recommendations made at the last inspection visit.

## **The annual return**

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

**Annual Return Received:** Yes - Electronic

## **Comments on Self Assessment**

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

The service completed and submitted a self assessment as requested. We saw that the manager had taken on board feedback at our last Inspection about reviewing the self assessment to be more outcome focussed and to involve more service user views.

## **Taking the views of people using the care service into account**

One young person talked enthusiastically about the work of Fostering Relations Ltd and the difference the service had made to his life. Some of his comments have been included within this report.

Observations of a very young service user with foster carers highlighted the skills and dedication of foster carers within the service. For this particularly vulnerable child, 24 hour per day high level nurturing and care had been provided over a sustained period.

## **Taking carers' views into account**

Overall, foster carers spoke positively about their experience of the service and the support provided to them by staff and managers. Some of their comments have been included within this report.

## 3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

### Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

#### Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

#### Service strengths

The information we looked at showed a range of opportunities for foster carers, children and young people to be involved in the development of the service.

Foster carers told us they had good working relationships with their individual supervising social workers, who visited regularly. We saw evidence of telephone and email contact providing opportunities to share their views about the service with any member of the team.

Foster carers told us that if their named worker was not available, they would be able to speak with the manager and that messages left were responded to promptly.

One foster carer commented:

"Fostering relations have been superb; in many ways the experience has been life changing and with the support of fostering relations we know we are making a difference for the life of the child."

Fostering agreements were in place that detailed the responsibilities of the fostering service and the expectations of the foster carers.

Foster carers had formal opportunities to give feedback to the service including through regular consultations and support groups. Foster carers told us that support groups provided them with peer group support and an opportunity to discuss fostering and service development issues.

They told us:

"We attend support groups every three months and we air our views there."

We saw, in supervision records, that foster carers were expected and encouraged to share their views about the quality of training. All foster carers talked enthusiastically about the quality of training and we found that more specialised training was being provided for more experienced carers.

We saw that newsletters and an email system (mailchimp), which could be used to monitor effective communication, had been developed to promote more involvement and information sharing on improvement action.

Children and young people's' views were sought at their own reviews and at carer reviews. We saw examples of questionnaires completed by young people commenting on the quality of their care.

Young people told the service:

"When I don't feel well or when I have hurt myself playing she makes me better, she makes cakes with me, I am never to miss a shower and she makes sure I clean my teeth, morning and night, she says I am needing to eat more vegetables."

"The family also make me feel safe because now I don't feel alone, abandoned, ignored."

Although it was not possible to interview birth parents as part of this inspection, there was evidence in children's files which showed several parents were actively involved in planning care for their child and that this was based on skilful relationship work by foster carers and supported by staff.

We took all of the above into account and considered some areas for improvement. Overall, we assessed quality in this area as good.

### **Areas for improvement**

We considered that more regular opportunities, for all children and young people within foster families, to contribute to improvement work would further support involvement and participation.

The service should ensure that there are regular and varied opportunities for birth parents to receive information about the service and to contribute to developments in the service.

Some foster carers told us they would like to have more say in the training opportunities being made available to them. When we talked to the manager about

this we were told that many foster carers do contribute to the development of the training calendar within views expressed at foster carer reviews, in support groups and annually through a questionnaire. A recent example was given regarding training requested by a foster carer for Looked After Children Reviews and Children's Panel Reviews. The manager told us that this training would be available within the next training calendar produced. The manager also told us that over the last six months, information on actions taken to improve the service has been shared with foster carers through mailchimp.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 4 - Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

### Statement 3

We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met.

#### Service strengths

We found very good evidence that the health and wellbeing needs of people who used the service were being met.

Meeting children's health needs was an element of the preparation group for prospective foster carers. This gave applicants the opportunity to learn about child development and attachment and how it could be delayed or damaged through children and young people's traumatic life experiences.

Applicant foster carers had opportunity to learn about the individual roles of a range of professionals including the supervising social worker, education support worker and panel members.

All foster carers had a full medical with their GP as part of the assessment process. Reports were scrutinised by the Agency Medical Advisor (ADM) who commented on the applicant's suitability to become foster carers. We saw that foster carer assessments included consideration of how they would meet the health needs of children placed with them, including children's mental and emotional health.

We saw that foster carer assessments and reviews included a risk assessment of the carer's home and environment. This made sure that children and young people were cared for in a safe and secure environment.

Records we sampled showed that statutory checks of foster carers were undertaken, including Protection of Vulnerable Groups, Local Authority, personal references and employer references.

We found that children and young people who were being looked after away from

home were provided with a comprehensive service to meet their health needs. Records confirmed that children were being offered a health assessment appropriate to their age soon after being placed in a foster family. This included meeting with the child and carer and parent (if possible) to identify and plan for meeting and continuing to monitor health needs.

From discussions with staff, foster carers and a young person, we found that children were encouraged and supported to stay active and lead healthy lifestyles. For example, one young person told us: "I am very well looked after here. I am always on the go, I love football and I am joining a new team. I like going for walks as well. The food is good and I have a dentist and go to the doctors if I have to. I have hobbies and I am very happy."

Records we looked at and discussions with foster carers told us that carers were confident in meeting children's health needs. Overall, there was good support from social workers to ensure foster carers could make sure children attended all health appointments, as well as spending time supporting healthy lifestyles and therapeutic activities.

Foster carers were provided with a wide range of training to support them in looking after children including child protection and promoting wellbeing, attachment and loss, and permanency.

Foster carers told us they valued the training they received and found it was relevant to the fostering task. There was an expectation in the service that foster carers evidence their learning from training and how this would improve the service they provided to children. This was monitored at the foster carers' annual review so that the service could ensure foster carers were improving their practice to be more effective carers.

Foster carers said:

"Over the 4 years we have had excellent support and it is all about the quality of life for the child."

"We get ongoing training which we find absolutely invaluable."

"Training is a huge asset to the service and to us Foster carers, and we get support 24 hours a day."

Children and young people were very well supported to achieve in their education. Attendance and attainment were monitored and promoted by the education coordinator whose support was described by foster carers as "invaluable". This led to very good outcomes for children and young people and foster carers recognised this as having a highly positive impact on their ability to sustain permanent placements.

We took all of the above into account and some areas for improvement and assessed overall quality in this area as very good.

### **Areas for improvement**

Foster carer chronologies could be recorded and maintained within foster carer records. This will highlight significant events and changes and support a greater knowledge and understanding of the carers by the service.

Children and young people could be further supported to access information about their rights, health and education more easily and regularly.

The service could consider developing a policy to support children and young people to save money while with carers.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

### Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

#### Service strengths

Information recorded in Quality Theme 1, Care and Support, Statement 1, has also been taken into account in assessing the grade for this statement.

Foster carers told us they did feel able to express their views about staff members and that these views were taken into account by the staff members and manager. This generally led to good relationships between foster carers and their supervising social workers.

Taking all of the above into account and the areas for improvement identified, we assessed quality in this area as good.

#### Areas for improvement

The service had not progressed with identified improvements in this area since the last Inspection. This impacted on the grade awarded. The service should progress plans to further ensure the views of foster carers and children/young people are regularly gathered and used to improve the quality of staffing. Feedback should be provided to inform foster carers and children/young people about how their views have been used.

The service should consider involving foster carers and young people in ongoing staff appraisal. This will provide further opportunities for involving service users in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 4 - Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

### Statement 3

We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.

### **Service strengths**

Foster carers were supported in meeting children and young people's needs by professional, trained and motivated staff.

Staff within the service were knowledgeable and skilled in the work they undertook. As appropriate, staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) which regulates staff in social care settings. Staff knew about the SSSC codes of practice and that these codes underpinned their work.

Staff benefited in their professional development from a wide range of training opportunities, both internal and external, that supported them in the work they did.

Staff we spoke with confirmed they received regular and effective supervision. They also valued the opportunity for informal supervision from the manager and colleagues.

Staff members commented:

"There have been lots of changes but the core of what we do, and what we believe is important, has stayed the same. I value the work our carers do and I will make sure they receive every bit of help and support I can give."

"We work closely as a team. We do know each other's carers and we know the children well. We can cover for each other when it comes to giving some advice."

Foster carers confirmed the professional approach by staff:

"They are not pushy in terms of placements, as they want to make sure it is a good match."

"They are honest and helpful, and I have no complaints."

Staff worked in partnership with other agencies to ensure children and young people's needs were met. This was confirmed by other professionals we spoke with such as the independent panel members. Placing social workers we contacted welcomed working in partnership with the service. They were confident that any issues they raised about a foster placement were addressed with the child's needs at the centre. Placing social workers told us they saw that foster carers had a good understanding of key issues, such as attachment and loss and child protection. This gave further evidence of the competence of staff.

We considered all of the above information and some areas for improvement; we assessed quality in this area as very good.



### **Areas for improvement**

The staff team had undergone significant changes and were in need of a period of consolidation in order to effectively develop a team working culture and consistency of practice.

New staff had experienced a positive and thorough induction into the UK wide organisation and at a local level. The new carer recruitment officer presented as motivated and skilled. The manager should continue to develop and support this new role within the service.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 5 - Very Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## **Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership**

Grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

### **Statement 1**

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

### **Service strengths**

Information recorded in Quality Theme 1, Care and Support, Statement 1 and Quality Theme 3 Staffing, Statement 1, has also been taken into account in this statement.

Foster carers we spoke with felt generally involved in the overall development of the service. They had opportunities to express their views at reviews, support groups and training. Information about proposed changes was raised in consultation meetings, support group discussions and in newsletters.

Most foster carers knew who the managers and leaders of the service were and had some information about their roles.

We took all of the information above and some areas for improvement into account and assessed quality in this area as good.

### **Areas for improvement**

The service had not progressed with identified improvements in this area since the last inspection. This impacted on the grade awarded. The service should now progress plans to further ensure the views of foster carers and children/young people are regularly gathered and used to improve the quality of management and leadership. Feedback should be provided to inform foster carers and children/young people about how their views have been used.

The service could consider involving more foster carers and young people in the recruitment of managers and in their ongoing appraisal. This will provide further opportunities for involving service users in assessing and improving the quality of management and leadership in the service.

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**Grade awarded for this statement:** 4 - Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

### Service strengths

The service had good systems in place to ensure consistent quality and continuous improvements. However, due to the change of ownership and major management structure changes, this had not been robustly sustained since our last Inspection.

Procedures were in place to record performance information including the work of the service such as; the number of carers, numbers of children awaiting placements and numbers of placement disruptions.

Some fostering panel members told us they had attended training provided to foster carers and staff and this supported a team working and learning culture.

Records showed the fostering panel had regular business meetings to review, monitor and evaluate their work and to make sure they were discharging their duties effectively and identifying improvements.

We attended and observed a fostering panel. We found the panel was well organised and effectively chaired. Panel members treated attendees with respect. All panel members were prepared and took part in highlighting key areas for discussion and clarification. Clear recommendations were made by the panel to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM).

The work foster carers undertook was monitored in the following ways:

- Regular supervision visits which were recorded
- Annual unannounced visits
- Feedback from other agencies such as health and education
- Reviews through the fostering panel.

The work staff undertook was monitored in the following ways:

- Regular supervision that included reflective discussions as well as case discussions
- Team meetings
- Joint visits when required with the manager
- Management attendance at the fostering panel.

The service had a complaints policy in place which included the Care Inspectorate contact details. The service told us that they had not received any complaints during the last 12 months.

We saw that there were business and strategic plans which outlined the direction of travel for the service.

We took all of the above information and some areas for improvement into account and assessed quality in this area as good.

### **Areas for improvement**

Although we found that some improvement work had been progressed by the service, we also found this had not been robustly sustained since our last Inspection. This has impacted on the grade awarded for this statement.

The service should refer to the Care Inspectorate guidance to providers on notification of incidents. This was discussed with the manager during feedback and awareness raised about the need to be vigilant in following the guidance at all times.

The Fostering Service should consider carrying out a full stakeholder analysis to identify all stakeholders so that they can more systematically inform service development. This could include for example, stakeholders such as the Looked After and Accommodated Children nurse (LAAC nurse), psychotherapists, trainers, placing social workers and birth families and children within the foster carers wider family. We will monitor this at the next inspection.

**Grade awarded for this statement:** 4 - Good

**Number of requirements:** 0

**Number of recommendations:** 0

## 4 Other information

### Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

### Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

### Additional Information

Not applicable.

### Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in the Care Inspectorate re-grading a Quality Statement within the Quality of Management and Leadership Theme (or for childminders, Quality of Staffing Theme) as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme being re-graded as unsatisfactory (1).

## 5 Summary of grades

<b>Quality of Care and Support - 4 - Good</b>	
Statement 1	4 - Good
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
<b>Quality of Staffing - 4 - Good</b>	
Statement 1	4 - Good
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
<b>Quality of Management and Leadership - 4 - Good</b>	
Statement 1	4 - Good
Statement 4	4 - Good

## 6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
26 Sep 2013	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 5 - Very Good Management and Leadership 5 - Very Good
2 Nov 2012	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 6 - Excellent Management and Leadership 6 - Excellent
26 Oct 2010	Announced	Care and support Not Assessed Staffing 5 - Very Good Management and Leadership 6 - Excellent
9 Dec 2009	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 4 - Good Management and Leadership Not Assessed
2 Oct 2008	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Staffing 4 - Good

## Inspection report continued

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		Management and Leadership 3 - Adequate
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All inspections and grades before 1 April 2011 are those reported by the former regulator of care services, the Care Commission.

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### Translations and alternative formats

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ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

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