

Care service inspection report

Fostering Relations Ltd

Fostering Service

Dalgety Bay Business Centre

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Telephone: 01383 828245

Inspected by: Lorna Black

Donna Borek

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 2 November 2012



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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	5	Very Good
Quality of Staffing	6	Excellent
Quality of Management and Leadership	6	Excellent

What the service does well

The service consults well with people who use the service and with stakeholders. We saw that people could influence all aspects of the service from individual care and support issues to overall strategy within the organisation.

We thought that the service was particularly good at matching young people with foster carers who could meet their needs.

Foster carers told us that the quality of the staff group and of the support they received was excellent.

Young people told us that their foster carers looked after them very well.

What the service could do better

The service had some issues with information not being updated and should ensure that file audits capture this in future.

We also discussed with the service other areas that they could develop to improve the service beyond the already very good practice. These are detailed within the body of the report.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The service has continued to grow since the last inspection but has continued to have a watchful eye on the quality of the provision.

Conclusion

We found that Fostering Relations provides a high standard of support and demonstrated a commitment to continual improvement and development.

Who did this inspection

Lorna Black

Donna Borek

Lay assessor: Not Applicable

1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Prior to 1 April 2011, this function was carried out by the Care Commission. Information in relation to all care services is available on our website at www.scswis.com.

The 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 needs to 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 based on best practice or the National Care Standards.

- 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 ("the Act") and secondary legislation made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Where there are breaches of Regulations, Orders or Conditions, a requirement may be made.

Requirements are legally enforceable to the discretion of the Care Inspectorate.

Fostering Relations is a small 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 a 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.

As at 31 December 2011 the service had recruited 24 foster carers who looked after 26 children and young people on a short and long term basis. Eight foster carers have been assessed and approved between 1 January and 31 December 2011.

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

Quality of Care and Support - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Staffing - Grade 6 - Excellent

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 6 - Excellent

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 or by calling us on 0845 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 after an announced inspection which took place between Monday 29 October and Friday 2 November 2012. The inspection was undertaken by Lorna Black and Donna Borek, Care Inspectors.

As requested by us, the service sent us an annual return. The service also completed a self-assessment prior to the inspection starting.

In this inspection we gathered evidence from various sources, including the relevant sections of policies, procedures, records and other documents including:

- * Evidence from the service's most recent self evaluation
- * Evaluations of the service collected by the service
- * Findings from Independent audits commissioned by the service.
- * Surveys completed by panel members and panel chairpersons for the Care Inspectorate
- * Foster Carer's Files
- * Children's Files
- * Discussion with the manager and the provider
- * Discussion with the staff who worked in the service
- * Discussion with children's social workers
- * Discussion with foster carers
- * We talked with children who used the service
- * We attended a fostering 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

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

The service had appropriately addressed the recommendation made at the time of the last inspection in relation to publicising participation outcomes.

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 self assessment comprised a list of evidence and did not appropriately analyse the impact of these on service users or the service. We had a discussion with the manager and the provider about how this could be improved.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

All the foster carers and young people we spoke with spoke very highly about the service - some comments included:

"I think this service is brilliant and I cannot think of anything that they could improve" (foster carer)

"The service is there for us 100%" (foster carer)

"I want to stay with my foster carer until I am 16 - they are great." (child)

Taking carers' views into account

We did not speak with birth families as part of this inspection.

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: 5 - Very 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

We assessed that there was comprehensive evidence of regular user/carer involvement. The service used a range of different methods, to engage with people who used the service and ensured that findings of all consultations were reported back appropriately. The service gave all foster carers copies of the National Care Standards for fostering and family placement services. This meant that foster carers could give informed feedback to the service based on recognised best practice. Foster carers and children felt involved in assessing and improving all aspects of the service. The participation strategy had recently been updated to reflect practice within the service. Foster carers had been fully involved in this review process and discussed with the inspector different ways the service asked for their views. All the foster carers we spoke with felt confident in sharing information with the service. Foster carers knew what to expect of the service and felt able to discuss any issues with their link workers on a regular basis. The service had carried out an independent audit of visits made by supervising social workers and expected that all foster carers would receive at least 2 visits every month. Annual reviews were carried out for all carers either at the fostering panel, which was independent of the service, or by the independent review officer. Fostering Agreements were in place which detailed the responsibilities of the foster carer and the fostering service.

Foster carers felt knowledgeable about their roles and this was enhanced by very good access to training and attendance at peer support groups.

Participation was a central feature of the service and carers could influence change at all levels. For example foster carers had the opportunity to read and make comment about the draft strategic plan and the plan had been changed to incorporate these views.

There were formal opportunities where the service consulted with foster carers such as the use of questionnaires and more informal discussion through the carer support groups where foster carers could set the agenda. We saw that results from any consultations or surveys were reported to service users through personal letters or the service newsletter. The newsletters also kept service users informed about what was happening within the service.

Looked After Children using the fostering service felt able to express their views about a range of areas within the service. Children told us that they thought the service listened to what they had to say about their placements and the service. For example the contents of the welcome boxes had been amended to contain a digital camera rather than a disposable one following a survey of children and young people using the service.

Children and young people could also contact the service at any time by posting one of the pre paid post cards which were part of the welcome box. In this way they could share their views directly with the manager of the service. We discussed examples where the service had responded directly to children who had contacted them.

We did not interview birth parents as part of this inspection. However the service sought parents views on a regular basis and had enjoyed some success in working with birth parents through some difficult situations.

As a result of participation being central to all aspects of the service, carers were confident in encouraging good communication with families and children to ensure they were receiving the best outcomes.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to develop the excellent practice within the service.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

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

Service strengths

Foster carers felt well supported in relation to health matters. For example, all foster carers had full medical examinations as part of the assessment process and the bi annual medical updates were required to assess their on going suitability to foster and to continue to meet children's needs.

Foster carers felt confident about meeting the health and wellbeing needs of the children they looked after. They were able to access a range of training on issues such as child development, child protection and self harming behaviour in children and young people. Much of this was available prior to approval and this meant that even inexperienced foster carers had very good knowledge which supported their care of children.

Recently the service had supported foster carers to attend an 8 week training course in attachment. Foster carers who had attended the course found it extremely helpful in understanding some of their own attachment behaviour and how this impacted on the care of the children and young people they were looking after.

Monthly reporting of health issues ensured that the service maintained an overview of how children's needs were being met. The foster carers we spoke with were aware of issues of healthy eating and the importance of keeping children active. We spoke with one young person who had attended the dentist for the first time and had to have a number of teeth removed. We assessed that children's lives generally were improved by using the fostering service.

There was evidence that staff and foster carers recognised children's needs to feel safe.

- * Risk assessments had been completed for each foster carer's home.
- * Risk assessments were also completed for each child moving into a fostering household and
- * a plan was in place to ensure that any identified risks could be managed effectively.
- * All staff within the fostering service and foster carers had attended child protection training

There was compelling evidence of the service meeting children's health and wellbeing needs. For example:

- * the service presented evidence of the very close and collaborative work between a foster carer and a birth parent to support a child in placement. This birth parent had refused to engage with the child's social worker.

- * The service had contributed to an assessment with regards to rehabilitation. Rehabilitation was abandoned and letters from medical professionals detailed the positive outcomes for the children in relation to speech, learning and development.

- * We spoke with one foster carer who looked after a child on a permanent basis. They described how they had advocated for a child to maintain meaningful contact with his birth family. This has been very beneficial for the child and the child's birth family

* The service had advocated on behalf of a child and sought help from health colleagues to support a move of school for a child with complex health needs. Such a move significantly reduced the travelling time to school.

* The service gave examples where they had funded specific resources for children using the service such as play therapy.

Foster carers had developed profiles about their family and the home environment which could be used by the social worker to introduce the child to the foster carer prior to placement. The service operated a risk averse matching procedure. The manager and provider explained that very careful matching took place and if there were any concerns at all that the match was not a very good one, it did not take place. This meant that there were only very few occasions where children had to move placement and most placements were considered appropriate in meeting children's needs. We saw an example of the matching procedure in operation. This was about placing a child of a different cultural heritage and religion. We were very impressed at the thought and consideration given to this by the service and the foster carer. The young person's needs were seen as central and her views in relation to the proposed match were very carefully considered before the placement proceeded.

The service had begun to use an outcome measuring tool which was completed by the link worker in consultation with the child's social worker. The aim of this tool was to map improvement in the child's circumstances and the effectiveness of the support for the child.

Areas for improvement

We thought that some of the risk assessments carried out at the time of placement were not specific enough. One risk assessment we looked at had two children's names on it and it was unclear to whom the risk applied. The tick box style did not leave space to add more information about specific risks. We thought that the service could improve these by making them more specific and detailed.

We saw that the front sheets of files had not been updated to reflect changes to the foster carer approval. The service should ensure that files are updated appropriately when required.

We did not see evidence of the Health and Safety audits carried out in relation to a foster carer's home being reviewed annually as expected within the service. We also thought these were ambiguous in relation to whether planned tasks such as obtaining a fire blanket had in fact been carried out. We discussed with the service that these needed to be dynamic tools which would change as soon as any changes took place within the foster carer's home such as any home improvements or new

pets etc. (See recommendation made under Quality Theme 1, Quality Statement 3.)

Although we thought the service was currently operating at a very good level, we further discussed with them a number of areas:

- * How they could better record their matching criteria in each individual case,
- * How they extend the use of their outcome measuring tool and
- * How they could continue to develop the attachment training in a supportive environment for foster carers, keeping this central in their care of children.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 1

Recommendations

1. The service must ensure that environmental risk assessments on foster carers' homes are reviewed regularly and at least annually.
National care Standards, Foster Care and Family Placement Services, Standard 2: Promoting Good Quality Care.

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

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 under Quality Theme 1, Statement 1 has also been taken into account here.

Foster Carers were able to assess and improve the quality of staffing within the service. Foster carers were asked about the quality of support they received from their link workers at carer reviews and at the fostering panel.

The service had also successfully involved one young person in staff recruitment.

Areas for improvement

The fostering service should continue to develop the excellent practice in the service.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

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

Fostering Relations created a very open culture where ownership of the organisation was actively encouraged. Staff told us that Fostering Relations was a listening organisation and that they were consulted regularly about how the service might improve. This included their own development as workers.

We saw the workforce was professional, knowledgeable and skilled in the work they undertook. This was confirmed by the foster carers we spoke with and the placing social workers. A comprehensive induction programme was in place for new workers which introduced them to the aims and values of the service.

Staff confirmed that they were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council and worked to appropriate codes of practice.

Clear guidance was available for staff which promoted consistency in their practice.

Staff were knowledgeable about their work and this was supported by very good access to training from internal and external sources. Staff welcomed the learning and development opportunities and noted that any new resources such as books were purchased quickly ensuring that staff could keep up to date with best practice and legislation. In turn this meant that foster carers and the children in their care benefited from good advice about practice. Foster carers told us that they received good quality advice from their workers in relation to supporting children in placement.

Supervision and Appraisal processes were given appropriate priority and were valued by managers and staff. Both afforded staff and managers the opportunity to reflect on practice and decide plans for ongoing professional development. Each member of staff had an individualised professional development plan.

Staff told us that the manager and the provider of the service were always accessible for advice and discussion. Generally staff felt well supported in their roles.

Staff confirmed very good working links with a range of partner agencies including BAAF and the Fostering Network. Staff saw this as opportunity to discuss issues and share practice.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to build on the excellent practice found at this inspection.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

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 under Quality Theme 1, Statement 1 and Quality Theme 3, Quality Statement 1 has also been taken into account here.

Foster carers felt fully involved in the overall development of the service. Comments made about the draft strategic plan were instrumental in changes being made to the plan.

Foster Carers could discuss any service issues with managers at all levels within the organisation.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue the excellent practice in this area.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

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

Foster carers and children benefited from an organisation that had systems in place to make sure they received a quality service.

The service had developed a systematic approach to ensuring and assuring quality.

The provider had commissioned a series of independently led audits of the whole service in relation to the National Care Standards as well as individual audits of certain parts of the service. Findings from these audits were included as improvements within the Annual Report and Business Plan.

The fostering panel provided an important quality assurance role within the fostering service. A panel manager (non voting), employed by Fostering Relations sat on the panel in an advisory role. The remainder of the panel members and the Agency Decision Maker were independent. Recently the service had introduced procedures for each fostering panel to report on the quality of work of the fostering service. For example they could comment on the quality of the reports and the presentation of staff. Panel members reported good access to training and advice. Generally we found the panel to be effective in their discussions and recommendations. An annual panel report detailed the work of the fostering panel, feedback from people who had attended the panel and the background experience of panel members. The latter had been requested by foster carers.

A strategic plan had been developed and had been circulated as a draft plan to staff and service users. We could see that the plan had been changed in the light of suggestions from foster carers.

We also saw evidence of foster carers and children making suggestions which led to changes to the service. Examples included changes to the welcome pack as well as a new form being developed to support the exchange of information between carers when children were having respite.

File audits in relation to case recording and content had been carried out to ensure that information contained within the files was appropriate and consistent. Staff told us that they had been contributed to new forms for recording supervision visits and unannounced visits with foster carers.

A stakeholder survey had been carried out with regard to the quality and effectiveness of management of the service. Feedback had been very positive.

In conclusion we assessed that participation was well established for children and foster carers and we saw that service users could influence the service at all levels. We could see that staff were consulted and supported to suggest and drive forward improvements to the service. We found strong evidence that stakeholders such as local authorities were regularly consulted about service quality and performance.

Areas for improvement

The agency should continue to develop the excellent practice in this area.

Grade awarded for this statement: 6 - Excellent

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

None noted.

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 SCSWIS re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).

5 Summary of grades

Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
Quality of Staffing - 6 - Excellent	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 3	6 - Excellent
Quality of Management and Leadership - 6 - Excellent	
Statement 1	6 - Excellent
Statement 4	6 - Excellent

6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
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
		Management and Leadership	3 - Adequate

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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