

Care service inspection report

Fostering Relations Ltd

Fostering Service

Dalgety Bay Business Centre

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Inspected by: Lisa Kirkbride

Type of inspection: Announced (Short Notice)

Inspection completed on: 26 September 2013



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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	5	Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	5	Very Good

What the service does well

Children and young people who live with foster carers recruited and supported by Fostering Relations Ltd, have their health and wellbeing needs well met.

Foster carers shared their views through a wide range of opportunities and their views led to development within the service.

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

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

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

Clear leadership values are embedded which support a determined commitment to providing "the best" possible care for children and young people.

What the service could do better

Children and young people 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, we thought that more could be done to engage the views of children and grandchildren of foster carers.

We found that there had been a number of team and staff changes since our last visit. The service identified the need to ensure consistency of practice.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The service has continued to grow as planned and has sustained the high levels of support provided to foster carers.

A clear focus on quality has led to several development initiatives including a strategy for learning and development at all levels within the organisation.

Conclusion

Fostering Relations Ltd are committed to sustaining high quality foster care. Overall, we found that the outcomes for service users were very good.

Who did this inspection

Lisa Kirkbride

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

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 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 December 2012 the service had recruited 28 foster carers who looked after 32 children and young people on a short and long term basis. Eight foster carers had been assessed and approved between January and December 2012.

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 5 - Very Good

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 5 - Very 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 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 following an inspection announced at short notice. This was carried out by Inspector Lisa Kirkbride. The inspection took place between Tuesday 17 September 2013 and Thursday 26 September 2013.

We gave feedback to the registered manager of the service on Thursday 26 September 2013.

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 gathered information from various sources, including the following:

- The management team
- The independent reviewing officer
- Two placing social workers who had responsibility for children placed with foster families
- Three individual foster families in their homes and discussion with a foster carer by telephone.
- Three children/young people who were being looked after by foster carers
- We observed foster carer's interaction with other children they were looking after
- Independent panel members

We looked at:

- Three foster carer files
- Three children/young people's files
- The foster carers handbook
- Foster carer newsletters
- Records kept about a range of meetings.

- Records relating to evaluation and audit activity

We looked at the website.

We attended and observed a Fostering panel.

We attended and observed a foster carer review.

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

One recommendation was made at the last inspection and appropriate action had been taken to address the recommendation.

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 was completed and submitted as requested. More examples of outcomes and more information about areas for improvement would improve the quality of the self assessment.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

The views of children and young people and of foster carers were gathered during the inspection. We used these views to consider the quality of the service.

Taking carers' views into account

We did not talk with birth families during this inspection. The agency had ensured that where possible, the views of birth families regarding children's plans were clearly recorded within case records.

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

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

All foster carers told us they had good working relationships with their individual supervising social workers who visited on a minimum fortnightly basis. There was evidence of regular telephone contact and emails supporting foster carers, providing them with opportunities to express their views about the service. Foster carers told us that if their named worker was not available, they would be able to speak with the duty worker. Messages left were responded to promptly.

One foster carer commented;

"There is nothing they could do to improve. They make you feel equal and we get to voice our opinions. If we thought there should be changes we would be listened to, they are always there, always on the other end of the phone and (name of supervising social worker) is understanding".

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 issues. We found clear evidence that issues raised were considered by staff

and the management team who always provided a written response identifying appropriate action to be taken.

Foster carers were asked to contribute ideas and suggestions for training and most of the topics were included in the training calendar. We saw in supervision records that foster carers were expected and encouraged to share their views about the quality of the training.

We saw the newsletter and website 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.

Children and young people were given the opportunity to complete a feedback questionnaire for their foster carers' annual reviews.

Although it was not possible to interview birth parents as part of this inspection, there was evidence in children's files which showed some parents were involved in planning for their child.

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

Areas for improvement

The manager told us about plans to improve the website for sharing information with children and young people.

We thought that more regular opportunities for the full range of children and young people within foster families to contribute would further support this area.

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

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very 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 Agency Medical Advisor and the Looked After and Accommodated Child (LAAC) nurse.

All foster carers had full medicals with their G.P. as part of the assessment process. Reports were scrutinised by the Agency Medical Advisor who commented on the applicant's suitability to become foster carers. The Medical Advisor provided guidance and advice to staff undertaking assessments. 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 carers' 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). Any health needs were identified and a health plan produced that would form part of the child's integrated plan.

We saw very good work on supporting education and transition arrangements. Foster carers confirmed the importance placed by the service on aiming for good education outcomes.

One young person told us:

" Everything gets talked about. I know its important to do well at school so that I can have a good life, sometimes its hard, I get the help I need, I get help to stay at school, to go to the dentist, you know all the usual things."

From discussions with foster carers and children and young people, we found that children were encouraged and supported to stay active and lead healthy lifestyles.

Records we looked at and discussions with foster carers told us that carers were confident in meeting children's health needs. Overall there was very good support from resource workers to ensure foster carers could make sure children attended all health appointments and meet the service expectations.

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 record keeping.

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.

We had a look at the website which had information for foster carers. This included reference to other links such as the Fostering Network. We thought that this would offer foster carers even more opportunity to learn about current issues and best practice for foster carers.

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

More dynamic risk management plans could be developed and used to ensure effective analysis of foster carers risk assessments in conjunction with those of children and young people.

A recommendation made in the last report about more regular updates to foster carers health and safety checks had been addressed, however, the service needed to continue to ensure procedures were being consistently applied.

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

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: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

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

Service strengths

Evidence 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 managers. This led to good relationships between foster carers and their resource workers.

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

Areas for improvement

The service identified the need to continue to involve more foster carers and young people in the recruitment of staff. We will monitor this at our next Inspection visit.

The service should consider involving foster carers and young people in monitoring staff performance. 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: 5 - Very 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. All 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 these codes underpinned their work.

Staff benefited 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 managers and valued peer support particularly at the present time of having a new staff team.

Staff members commented:

"We do work hard to ensure the best levels for our foster carers and for the children. Everyone needs individual attention".

"Culture is important, I'm proud and happy in my work".

"I feel I am supported well so that I can support the carers well".

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 service identified the need to develop written operating procedures for staff. This should be progressed to ensure consistency of expectations and practice.

The service should continue to ensure that anti-discriminatory practice and equality and diversity are maintained as areas for continuous learning and development for staff and managers.

The service should ensure vigilance in safer recruitment procedures at all times.

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: 5 - Very 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

Evidence 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 very much 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 included in support group discussions and in newsletters.

In the self assessment the service told us:

"Carers views canvassed about quality of management and leadership of the service to inform grading in self assessment - response on average was "delighted" ".

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 very good.

Areas for improvement

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

Following recent staff and structure changes, updated information should be provided in a variety of ways for foster carers, children and young people about the roles of managers within the service.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very 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 very good systems in place to make sure that the quality of work they did was consistent and any necessary improvements were identified.

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 and made efforts to put people at ease. All panel members were well prepared and had clearly read all relevant reports, highlighting key areas for discussion and clarification. Clear recommendations were made by the panel to the Agency Decision Maker.

We looked at a sample of Fostering Panel minutes and found them to be clear and concise. When we spoke to the Agency Decision Maker he confirmed the consistently high quality of information being shared and that decision making processes were robust.

When we observed an independent foster carer review, we found that similarly very good processes were in place. The independent reviewing officer was skilled in supporting the agency and foster carer to highlight areas of good practice and strength, and also at drawing attention to areas which required more attention and work.

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

- Regular supervision visits which were recorded. There was evidence that link workers monitored written records kept by foster carers.
- Annual unannounced visits.
- Feedback from children's social workers which included birth parents' views. This included end of placement reports.
- 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.
- Informal opportunities to discuss their work with managers.
- Joint visits when required with the team manager.
- Joint visits with the team manager to applicants during their assessment.
- Management attendance at the Fostering Panel.
- Second opinion visit carried out by the team manager during the foster carer assessment.
- Unfortunately, in some situations, foster placements break down. To understand why this happened and to learn from it, the service had arrangements to scrutinise these circumstances. The outcome of this was made available to senior management and was fed in to service developments.

We saw that file audits had been carried out to make sure written records were complete.

The Fostering Panel provided an important quality assurance function within the service. We saw helpful comments about the quality of reports in business meeting minutes and we heard how this information was being used to promote effective practice discussion between managers.

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. Some appropriate notifications had been made to the Care Inspectorate to ensure awareness of significant situations such as child protection, accidents and incidents and management changes.

An annual report and strategic business plan outlined current strengths and direction of travel and made recommendations for increased efficiencies in the service.

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

Areas for improvement

We noted that the service should improve the quality of their self assessment to ensure this reports on outcomes as well as processes and inputs. Areas for improvement should be highlighted within current context.

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 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: 5 - Very 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

None.

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

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

6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
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 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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Translations and alternative formats

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অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

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

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