

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

Inspection Report

Cariad Fostering Ltd

Sony UK Centre
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Introduction

Cariad Fostering Limited was registered as an independent fostering agency in February 2009. The agency is based in an office in the Sony UK centre on the Pencoed Technology Park, on the outskirts of Bridgend, near to the M4. The agency is managed by two directors one of whom is the responsible individual (Yvonne Krip) who manages the administration and financial administration of the agency. The other director (Susan Richardson) is the registered manager, who is responsible for the day to day management of the fostering agency. The agency provides long term, short term emergency and respite foster placements for children between the ages of 0 – 18 years old. The agency is also able to provide placements for children with special needs and disabilities. The agency is planning to apply for a variation to their registration to provide a short break/shared care service.

This baseline inspection was undertaken as part of CSSIW's routine schedule of inspections.

Inspection methods

Discussion with three foster carers and short discussion with three young people present during the visits.

Meeting with the manager and responsible individual.

Meeting with the supervising social worker.

Examination of the Service Data and self-assessment information.

Examination of three foster carers' files and three children's files.

Examination of one staff recruitment file.

Examination of the last review of quality of care report undertaken.

Summary of inspection findings

What does the service do well?

The staff team are very knowledgeable about the foster carers and the children in placement.

Good support is offered to the foster carers.

Very good training opportunities are offered to foster carers and staff.

Matching is seen as a priority and there was evidence that agency had a number of vacancies, some of which would not be filled because it would not be in the best interest of children that were already placed to have children placed alongside them.

The agency continually reviews its policies and procedures and presents them to carers at support groups.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The agency had put a system in place to ensure that important looked after children (LAC) documents were requested promptly, which was evidenced in the files examined.

Additional respite carers have been recruited as a result of consultation with foster carers.

What needs to be done to improve the service?

Criminal Records Bureau CRB checks need to be undertaken on staff before the expiry date of the last checks.

Evidence of the views of young people to be included in the review of quality of care report.

Quality of life

Overall, children and young people using the services were able to exercise their rights and control and their views and wishes were taken into account. They were encouraged to voice their opinion on how they were being cared for. The child centred approach by the agency promoted the emotional and physical well being of the children in placement.

Children and young people were on the whole supported to express their feelings on the care provided. Children were sent questionnaires as part of the foster carers' annual review which gave them an opportunity to say to how they felt about living with their foster carers. The children were also asked their views on the care provided when visits were made to foster carers, by the supervising social workers. Children were able to contribute to the organisation of the agency. One example seen was of a young person who had been involved in reviewing the children's guide and their recommendations had been implemented. Another example was of a young person who was involved in an informal interview and short listing of the recruitment of the supervising social worker.

Children were seen to be supported to achieve their educational potential. All of the children in placement with Cariad attended school and one young person was supported to attend a training programme. There were some good outcomes reported with one child having received an award for the most improved pupil and excellent school reports and another undertaking GCSE's and expecting to do well.

The physical wellbeing of children and young people was seen to be promoted and protected by the agency. Children were encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through healthy eating and taught good hygiene skills. All of the children in placement with Cariad had access to professional health services such as doctors, dentists and opticians if appropriate, as well as specialist health services. One example was seen of a young person whose health needs had improved considerably because of the support from his foster carers, which meant that he no longer required medication.

Children and young people are supported to enjoy access to a range of activities which promote their overall health and well being. The agency supported the foster carers and young people to attend activities based on their particular interests, examples which included football, horse riding, sledging. One young person had been made captain of his football team. The agency also organised fun days and outings for children and foster carers during school holidays. Two children were enjoying preparing for a caravan holiday with their foster carers during the inspector's visit to the foster carer's home and were very excited. During another visit to a foster carer's home a young person told the inspector she was going to watch a film she had wanted to see for a while with her foster carers and was really looking forward to it.

There was evidence of children's emotional feelings being enhanced, with one young person in particular having benefitted from structure within the foster carers home. The inspector saw evidence of comments from a child's social worker which supported this, which said 'The hard work that the foster carers have put into looking after the young person is clearly evident - she is much more sociable, her presentation has improved hugely and her general persona now presents as a happy and content young lady.'

Quality of staffing

Overall it was found that foster carers were supported by competent experienced and motivated staff who knew the foster carers and children very well.

Cariad is a small agency managed by a very experienced manager, the responsible individual and one full-time supervising social worker. The agency also employed an independent social worker to undertake assessments and cover when required. The staff team had the appropriate skills, experience and professional qualifications to deliver a high quality service. Discussion with the staff team and foster carers evidenced that the staff team were committed, enthusiastic and interested in their work with foster carers and children. Foster carers were complimentary of the level of support and knowledge provided by the staff team. One foster carer said 'the support from Cariad is brilliant; the staff visit every two weeks and are always available on the phone'. Foster carers also said that they felt part of a team and their views were valued by the staff team. Foster carers were also provided with an out of hours support service.

The supervising social worker was new to the agency but had several years of experience as a supervising social worker with a local authority fostering service. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they were well supported by the agency with supervision sessions held every two weeks between themselves and the supervising social worker. One foster carer said the supervising social worker was excellent and very supportive. Another said 'Always delivers when asked to find something out, very supportive'. Foster carers received timely support through supervision meetings which provided an opportunity to monitor the quality of care provided in the home, assess any specific training needs and to identify when extra support was required. Extra support was offered to foster carers through support groups and consultation events.

Quality of leadership and management

Overall it was found that children, young people and foster carers benefitted from a service that was well run, clear about its purpose, committed to improvement and managed effectively. Policies and procedures were regularly updated and provided in a handbook for foster carers.

Foster carers were clear about the service provided by Cariad. This was evidenced by discussion with the three foster carers visited as part of the inspection. The foster carers visited by the inspector confirmed that they had seen the agency's statement of purpose and that it reflected the work undertaken by the agency. A children's guide was provided to children in placements which was available in different formats. The children's guides had been developed in consultation with young people and included a storybook for younger children.

Staff delivering the service had been through a robust recruitment process. The supervising social worker recently recruited had all the required recruitment checks undertaken, which was recorded in the member of staff's file. The member of staff interviewed confirmed that the process undertaken was thorough. She also said that she had received a good induction period.

The manager contacted the inspector prior to the inspection to report that the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check on herself and the responsible individual was out of date by several months. This was an oversight by the agency and had been applied for before the inspection commenced. The inspector was subsequently informed on 2 May 2012 that they had been received and were clear. The manager had put in place a system to ensure that this did not happen again.

Good recruitment and vetting practices ensured the safety of children placed with foster carers. Foster carers in the agency were recruited appropriately. This was evidenced in the foster carer files examined by the inspector and discussion with staff and foster carers. The files examined contained evidence of thorough assessments using the BAAF Form F. CRB checks were undertaken on foster carers prior to approval and there was evidence of a system to ensure that foster carers CRB checks were updated every three years. All carers were taken to the agency's panel for consideration and recommendation as to their suitability to foster.

Foster carers and children were actively involved in determining and defining the service that supported them. A quality assurance system was in place which involved consulting with foster carers, panel members and local authority social workers through an annual questionnaire and a report produced in February 2012. It was disappointing to note that although 30 questionnaires had been sent out, only 6 had been returned, all from foster carers. The report could be further improved as there was little evidence of consultation with young people. However, there were other sources of evidence seen by the inspector that the agency consulted with young people e.g. at the carers annual review and when the supervising social worker visited the foster carers which could have been included in the report.

As a result of a good practice recommendation made at the last inspection the agency had put a system in place to ensure that important looked after children (LAC) documents were requested promptly, which was evidenced in the files examined.

Quality of foster carers

Overall it was found that children and young people benefitted from being cared for by foster carers who were motivated and promoted the physical, emotional and social development of the children placed with them.

Children benefitted from good procedures and practice which were designed to match them with foster carers that best meet their needs. Children in placement at the time of the inspection were appropriately matched to their foster carers and were placed within the foster carers' approval status. This was evidenced by discussion with the three foster carers visited as part of the inspection and by observation of the relationship between the foster carers and the young people placed. This was supported by evidence seen in a foster carer's file of an email from a local authority social worker to the manager, which said 'The foster carers are extremely informative and have a fantastic insight into the young persons behaviour, her level of understanding and also her emotional needs'.

The agency had a small number of foster carers and had made a conscious decision to remain a small agency as it was felt by the agency that it gave children, young people, foster carers and staff a feeling of belonging. The agency had a number of vacancies some of which would not be filled because it would not be in the best interest of children that were already placed to have other children placed alongside them.

Children were placed in foster carers homes that were safe and monitored on a regular basis by the supervising social worker. Discussion with staff and foster carers indicated that Cariad was committed to providing a safe environment for children placed with the agency. A comprehensive health and safety checklist was undertaken on each foster carer as part of the overall assessment prior to approval. Health and safety checks were updated annually in accordance with the foster carer's annual review and at the time of any new placements. A number of policies relating to health and safety had been developed to support the safety of children in placement. Unannounced visits were made to the foster carers on an annual basis. Safe caring guidelines and 'house rules' specific to the children in placement were viewed in the files examined. There was clear evidence in the files examined of discussion in supervision of safe caring issues.

All foster carers were expected to attend a 'Skills to Foster' training course prior to approval. Foster carers visited as part of the inspection confirmed that they had attended appropriate training and that any specific training needs were identified during supervision sessions.

The well being of children and young people was seen to be promoted and protected. This is because the agency ensured that foster carers attended training to develop their knowledge and understanding of safe care practices and protection of children from significant harm and abuse. There was evidence that foster carers had attended training on child protection, safe caring, behaviour management, first aid and other training specific to individual carers to support and promote the welfare of children and young people in placement.