

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

**Inspection report
Fostering services**

Cariad Fostering Ltd

Cariad Fostering Ltd
Sony UK Centre
Pencoed Technology Park
Pencoed
CF35 5HZ

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Dates of this inspection episode:	26 April 2011
Dates of other relevant contact since last report:	
Date of previous report publication:	
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Introduction

This report has been compiled following an inspection of the fostering service undertaken by Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000 and associated regulations.

The primary focus of the report is to comment on the quality of life and quality of care experienced by service users (foster carers and children in placement).

The report contains information on how we inspect and what we find. This inspection focuses specifically on the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 but also takes into account the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services.

The report is divided into nine sections reflecting the broad areas covered by the inspection:

1. Summary of findings
2. Policies and procedures / information
3. Management and staffing of the service, (including premises and finance)
4. Provision of foster carers (including fostering panel)
5. Quality of care and safety for children placed
6. Placement of children, parts v & vi of the regulations
7. Records
8. Short term placements
9. Family and friends as carers

CSSIW inspectors are authorised to enter and inspect fostering services at any time. Inspection enables CSSIW to satisfy itself that the service should continue to operate, and for IFAs this will include satisfaction that continued registration is justified. It also ensures that all fostering services are compliant with:

Care Standards Act 2000 and The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003, whilst taking into account the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The service's own statement of purpose.

At each inspection episode there are visits to the service during which CSSIW may adopt a range of different methods in its attempt to capture service user's and their relatives'/representatives' experiences. Such methods may for example include self-assessment, discussion groups, case tracking, visits to carers' homes, observation, interviews, and the use of questionnaires. At any other time throughout the year visits may also be made to the service to investigate complaints and to respond to any changes in the service.

Readers must be aware that a report is intended to reflect the findings of the inspector at a specific period in time. Readers should not conclude that the circumstances of the service will be the same at all times.

The registered/responsible person/s is/are responsible for ensuring that the fostering service operates in a way which complies with the service specific regulations. CSSIW will comment in the general text of the inspection report on their compliance. For those regulations which CSSIW believes to be key in bringing about change in the particular service, they will be separately and clearly identified in the requirement section.

As well as listing these key requirements from the current inspection, requirements made by CSSIW since the last inspection, which have been met and those which remain outstanding are included in this report. The reader should note that requirements made in last year's report which are not listed as outstanding have been appropriately complied with.

Where key requirements have been identified, the provider is required under regulation 42B, (Compliance Notification), to advise, in writing, the appropriate regional office of the completion of any action required by CSSIW.

The regulated service is also responsible for having in place a clear, effective and fair complaints procedure which promotes local resolution between the parties in a swift and satisfactory manner, wherever possible. The annual inspection report will include a summary of the numbers of complaints dealt with locally and their outcome.

CSSIW may also be involved in the investigation of a complaint. Where this is the case CSSIW makes publicly available a summary of that complaint. CSSIW will also include within the annual inspection report a summary of any matters it has been involved in together with any action taken by CSSIW.

Should you have concerns about anything arising from the Inspector's findings, you may discuss these with CSSIW or with the registered person.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales is required to make reports on regulated services available to the public. The report is a public document and will be available on the CSSIW web site, www.cssiw.org.uk

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Section one: Summary of findings

Cariad Fostering Ltd was registered as an independent fostering agency in February 2009. This was the third inspection of the agency. The inspection was undertaken using the following methodology:

- Examination of Data collection form.

- Discussion with the registered manager and the responsible individual.

- Meeting with three foster carers.

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

- Questionnaires to foster carers (two returned), panel members (two returned) and placing authorities (two returned).

The agency is based in an office in the Sony UK Centre on the Pencoed Technology Park on the outskirts of Bridgend with good access to the M4. Other venues were used on a needs basis e.g. meetings, training and Panel.

The agency consisted of two directors, one of whom was the registered manager and the other the responsible individual. The responsible individual managed the administration and financial matters, while the registered manager was responsible for the day to day management of the fostering service. The manager had extensive experience of managing a fostering service and had extensive experience as a social worker and as a manager within looked after children services. The responsible individual had previously been an office and finance manager for a fostering agency and was experienced in office management and had a good knowledge of the needs of the fostering service. A supervising social worker (SSW) had been appointed since the last inspection. She has the necessary qualifications and experience for the role of supporting foster carers.

Evidence was provided that the foster carers received very good support and the agency was well managed. Children were appropriately matched with the foster carers visited, with evidence of introductory meetings and placement meetings being undertaken.

Both placing authorities who returned questionnaires were positive on the care being offered by the foster carers to the children in placement, with one commenting that the agency maintained a child centred approach and a high standard of advocacy on behalf of the child placed.

An area of concern raised by the inspector that was discussed with the manager and the responsible individual was the absence of important LAC (looked after children) documents from the local authorities.

A detailed report about the findings of this inspection can be found below. It is not possible for every aspect of the operation of an agency to be observed on each visit. The absence or reference to a particular fault or issue does not mean that such a fault did not exist. It is the responsibility of the registered persons to ensure that in all respects the fostering agency operates in accordance with the relevant Laws, Regulations and National Minimum Standards.

Section two: Policies and procedures / information

Inspector`s findings:

Cariad Fostering Ltd. had a Statement of Purpose/brochure which contained all the information required in Regulation 3.1 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 and Standard 1.4 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Statement of Purpose/Brochure was translated into the medium of Welsh. Foster carers indicated that they had received copies of the Statement of Purpose. Cariad had developed a website which provided information about fostering in general and about the agency.

Cariad Fostering Ltd. had a copy of a Children's Guide as required by Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. This was an informative and appropriate document for children aged 5-15 years. The agency had also produced a storybook which was suitable for younger children and children with disabilities. Evidence was provided for the inspection that indicated that children in placements had received a copy of the Children's Guide. Recent consultation had been undertaken with 'looked after children' on the content and format of the handbook and some changes made as a result of the feedback.

The manager confirmed that policies and procedures held by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) were as previously submitted. The agency had created a policy for Overseas Applicants for staff and foster carers since the last inspection and a Lone Working policy was also being produced.

The agency provided foster carers with a comprehensive A-Z Foster Carers Handbook. There was evidence that some foster carers had previously attended an induction day which included familiarisation of the agency's policies and procedures and the Foster Carers Handbook and its use as a working document. Foster carers contacted as part of the inspection indicated that this was a useful and informative handbook relevant to the agency. Feedback received by the agency on the carers handbook included 'Useful informative book that so far has answered all the questions we have needed answering'.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source	

Section three: Management and staffing of the services, (including premises and finance)

Inspector's findings:

Cariad Fostering Ltd was registered as a fostering agency in February 2009. The responsible individual and the registered manager are both directors of the company. The responsible individual managed the administration and financial matters, while the registered manager was responsible for the day to day management of the fostering service. The manager had extensive experience of managing a fostering service and had extensive experience as a social worker and as a manager within looked after children services. The manager held a management qualification and was registered with the Care Council for Wales. The responsible individual was very involved in the agency because of the size of the agency being small. She was experienced in office management but also had a good knowledge of the needs of the fostering service. The foster carers who met with the inspector as part of the inspection described the manager and the responsible individual as professional and approachable. The agency as a whole was described as being supportive and being committed to providing positive outcomes for children. One foster carer commented on feedback to the agency ' Cariad is a professionally run agency that shows and incredible amount of consideration for all carers and children alike'.

A supervising social worker (SSW) had been appointed since the last inspection. She has the necessary qualifications and experience for the role of supporting foster carers. The SSW also had additional skills in training and counselling. The SSW had undergone a period of induction and said that she received supervision from the registered manager on a regular basis. The SSW had attended a BAAF workshop on the 'Role and Responsibilities of the Supervising Social Worker' and the Fostering Network training on 'Young Parent and Child Placements' since she was employed by the agency.

An independent assessor/reviewer had been employed to undertake independent assessments. She was a retired team manager with a wealth of experience in fostering and had also been a foster carer.

The agency had undertaken a review of the service in February 2011 and a copy of the review of quality of care report was available during the inspection. The inspector was informed that the agency had consulted with foster carers and other stakeholders to inform the review of quality of care report. Areas covered in the report included communication, care, training, support groups, support, annual reviews, panel, policies and procedures , handbooks, LAC reviews/reviews, respite, assessment and staff.

The agency is based in an office in the Sony UK Centre on the Pencoed Technology Park on the outskirts of Bridgend with good access to the M4. Other venues were used on a needs basis e.g. meetings, training and Panel. There were adequate facilities for ensuring safety and confidentiality of records with locked filing cabinets in a separate lockable office.

Access to the building was secure with entry via a staffed reception area during office hours and any visitors were requested to sign in before entry. The office was kept locked

at all times when the staff were not present.

A policy relating to Fees and Finance was in place which outlined what the fees covered. The foster carers visited as part of the inspection indicated that payments were made promptly.

The responsible individual informed the inspector that the agency remained financially viable.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

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Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

Section four: Provision of foster carers (including panel)

Inspector`s findings:

Information received on the Annual Data Collection Part 2 indicated that Cariad Fostering Limited had eleven foster carers approved with one applicant currently subject to assessment. Cariad had set up a website and was registered with 'Simply Fostering' which it was said signposted prospective foster carers to fostering agencies registered with them. Recruitment of foster carers was limited by choice. The manager said that they preferred word of mouth referrals and had received lots of enquiries, but only proceeded with people who it was felt would fit in with the ethos of the agency.

Inspection of the foster carer files confirmed, that thorough assessments were conducted on foster carers using the BAAF Form F. Assessments were in compliance with Regulation 27 (2) (a) Schedule 3 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003. Criminal records bureau checks (CRB) were undertaken on carers prior to approval and these were updated every three years. One panel member who returned a questionnaire commented that very thorough assessments were undertaken, evidenced by detailed assessment forms that the panel received.

The manager said that all new foster carers were expected to undertake a 'Skills to Foster' course, facilitated by an external trainer, which was confirmed by the foster carers who met with the inspector as part of the inspection. There were certificates evidencing attendance at other relevant training in the files inspected. Foster carers who met with the inspector said that they had access to good training opportunities and supervision was used to identify any specific training needs they had. Cariad required all their carers to undertake a NVQ in childcare. The manager said that this is being phased out and being replaced by the QCF Child Care Learning and Development (CCLD). A transitional period is in place at the moment but the manager said that once the new qualification became available foster carers would be enrolled on the course.

The support offered to the foster carers by the agency was quoted by foster carers as a particular strength of the agency. Foster carers said that they had fortnightly visits from their SSW and that availability of out hours support was excellent.

Information provided for the inspection confirmed that a register of foster carers was kept. The foster carers who met with the inspector reported that the supervision and support offered by the agency was excellent. The foster carers said that they were attracted to joining the agency because it was so small and they knew all of the foster carers approved by the agency and received support from each other. Although the agency is currently very small a support group was held every three months.

Panel was not looked at in detail at this inspection as the panel met infrequently and no panels were planned during the inspection. Information received from the agency confirmed that appropriate membership of panel was in place which included representatives from health, education, social work, foster carer from another agency and a previously looked after person. The chair of panel had previous experience of sitting on

an independent fostering agency panel. A vice-chair was available to chair panel when the chair was unavailable which had occurred because of the unavailability of the chair because of other commitments. The manager said that if the situation continued then the agency would look at an alternative chair being recruited. Panel minutes provided for the inspection indicated that on the occasions that panel had met, the panel was quorate. Panel minutes also confirmed thorough discussion on the Form F's presented to panel.

All of the foster carers who were due an annual review had received one at the time of inspection. Carers who had received an annual review had received positive feedback from the children in placement, the SSW and the local authority social worker. All carers were taken back to panel as part of the annual review process.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

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Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

Section five: Quality of care and safety for children placed

Inspector`s findings:

Discussions 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. It was stated that health and safety checks would be 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.

All foster carers were expected to produce safer caring guidelines and ‘house rules’ specific to the child in placement was present in the files examined. The SSW had been instrumental in ensuring that safe caring policies were updated when appropriate. There was clear evidence in the files examined of discussion in supervision of safe caring issues. This was supported by a clear Safer Caring policy in the Foster Carers Handbook. The ‘Skills to Foster’ training pack included an element on safer caring, which all foster carers approved with the agency were expected to attend.

Evidence was provided that the agency promoted and facilitated contact for the children with their families in line with their care plans. One foster carer highlighted the venue provided for contact was not suitable, which she said was highlighted at the children’s LAC review.

Cariad provided several examples of positive outcomes for children placed with the agency. These included one young person who received student of the year at school despite many personal difficulties.

A clear and informative Child Protection policy was in place in the Foster Carers Handbook, which outlined the categories of abuse, recognising the signs of abuse, the role of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards, how to report abuse and the role of the foster carer and other agencies. A flowchart was included which was clear and informative. All carers who had been approved by the agency were expected to attend Child Protection training. No child protection concerns had been recorded since the agency had been registered.

The children in placement tracked as part of the inspection were registered with a GP and had access to a dentist and optician. The foster carers confirmed that there was an expectation that daily log sheets were kept which included a record of medical appointments, illnesses and accidents. One young person was overdue a LAC medical because of the foster carer not having received the appointment date, but the SSW said that this was now being arranged.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

Section six: Placement of children parts v & vi of the regulations

N.B. Use of this section of the report will apply primarily to inspections of local authority fostering services and the duties and responsibilities covered in Parts 5 and 6 of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003 only. It may need to be used for inspections of independent agencies where a local authority delegates certain duties to them under Regulation 40.

Inspector`s findings:
Information provided on the annual data collection form part 2 indicated that Cariad Fostering Ltd had eight children placed by four local authorities. During the last year Cariad had undergone the SEWIC (South East Wales Improvements Collaboration) assessment process, which enabled the agency to work with ten local authorities via the CCSR database. The agency provided copies of An All Wales Pre-Placement Agreement under Regulation 40 (4) delegation agreement and a child specific contract (Individual Placement Agreement) in line with Regulation 40 (5).

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

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Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

Section seven: Records

Inspector`s findings:

Cariad Fostering Ltd had written polices and procedures relating to Records and Record Keeping, Data Protection and Access To Information.

Information in relation to foster carers and young people was securely stored in locked cabinets on the premises of the agency. Foster carers indicated that they had secure, locked storage facilities for confidential information.

The inspector examined three foster carers' files and four children's files. The files were well ordered and structured. It was concerning to note that several important LAC documents which should have been provided by the local authorities was missing from the files examined. There was some evidence of letters to the local authorities requesting these documents and evidence of the SSW requesting these documents in placement meetings. The inspector discussed with the registered manager and the responsible individual the importance of these documents being in place. The agency had a structure in place of requesting documents from the social worker and subsequently copies to team managers and directors if the documents were not forthcoming. The agency was advised that this process should be implemented as a matter of urgency. Foster carers who met with the inspector were of the opinion that Cariad had provided them with as much information as they had and endeavoured to obtain as much information from the local authorities during placement meetings, but this was not always adequate.

The foster carers' files included relevant information as required under Regulation 30. It was noted by the inspector that training certificates were in the file and a separate training record was available on the agency database. A record of training was also available in the foster carers file.

All of the files examined contained copies of a Foster Carers Agreement, which covered all matters required such as terms of approval, review procedures etc.

A copy of minutes of panel meetings, with the relevant information of the foster carer, was also kept in the foster carers files. Letters of approval and approval certificates following panel were present in the files examined.

Foster carers were expected to keep a daily log and record significant events which were discussed during supervision sessions with the supervising social worker. Evidence of these were found in the files examined.

A written Complaints procedure was in place. The agency had access to an independent Complaints Officer. One complaint had been received by the agency since they were first registered which had been dealt with appropriately.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	Regulation number
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Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source
<p>The agency to ensure that if important LAC documentation is not provided by the local authorities, that systems are put in place to ensure that these are obtained without delay, including contacting directors of the local authorities if necessary.</p> <p>Ensure that evidence is on the files that every effort has been made to obtain important LAC documents.</p>	

Section eight: Short term placements

Inspector`s findings:

Cariad Fostering Ltd did not provide a formal short break service. The agency provided respite/short term placements to support full-time carers. Carers were subject to the same process of assessment, approval, support and training as full time carers. Because of the size of the agency respite was generally undertaken by carers who had their own placement or who did not currently have a placement. Two foster carers were providing regular support to other foster carers to support placements which were challenging. The manager said that they would like to recruit a foster carer who was approved for respite placements only.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source

Section nine: Family and friends as carers

Inspector`s findings:
Not applicable to Cariat Fostering.

Requirements made since the last inspection report which have been met:

Action required	When completed	Regulation number

Requirements which remain outstanding:

Action required (previous outstanding requirements)	Original timescale for completion	Regulation number

New requirements from this inspection:

Action required	Timescale for completion	Regulation number

Good practice recommendations:	NMS or other source