

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

Inspection Report

Cariad Fostering Ltd

Sony UK Centre
Pencoed Technology Park
Pencoed
CF35 5HZ

Type of Inspection – Baseline
Date(s) of inspection – 1, 9 and 15 April 2015
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Summary

About the service

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 is the office/finance manager. The other director, Susan Richardson is the registered manager, who is responsible for the day to day management of the fostering agency. Cariad is a small agency with twenty-one sets of approved foster carers at the time of the inspection. The agency provides a range of services for 'looked after' children between the ages of 0-18 years with sixteen children in placement. Cariad is a member of the Children's Commissioning Consortium Cymru Framework Agreement as a Tier 1 provider. The agency has also achieved the Investors in People award.

What type of inspection was carried out?

An announced baseline inspection was undertaken as part of CSSIW's schedule of annual inspections on 1, 9 and 15 April 2015. Methodology used included:

- Meeting with a group of foster carers (17)
- Meeting with the registered manager and the responsible individual
- Discussion with the three supervising social workers
- Examination of four foster carer's files and four children's files
Examination of the last three foster panel minutes
- Examination of the review of quality of care report undertaken in February 2015
- Examination of three annual reviews of foster carers
- Attendance at Children's and foster carer's achievements awards which included some discussion with young people on an informal basis
- Examination of one staff recruitment file
- Examination of the Statement of Purpose –updated April 2015

What does the service do well?

- The agency is small and staff have an in depth knowledge of the foster carers and children in placement.
- Foster carers we spoke with were highly complimentary of the support they received from the agency which also included out of hours, and said that staff went the 'extra mile' to support them
- Matching is a high priority and although the agency has a number of vacancies, some 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 provides stable placements and promotes permanency for the young

people placed. Two children are in the early stages of adoption by their foster carers and another set of foster carers had been granted a special guardianship order on two other children.

- Children and young people are provided with an excellent range of activities during the school holidays which staff are fully involved with.

What has improved since the last inspection?

- Foster carers we spoke with said that support groups had improved and were now more focussed.
 - More specialist training had been provided

What needs to be done to improve the service?

No areas of non-compliance were reported.

Quality Of Life

Overall, we (CSSIW) found that the welfare and needs of young people is central to the care which is provided at Cariad fostering agency. The child centred approach by Cariad promotes the emotional and physical well being of the children and young people in placement.

Children have a voice and are encouraged to speak up. We found that very good arrangements were in place for ensuring that young people, foster carers and significant stakeholders were consulted with and listened to, ensuring that the well-being of young people was promoted and protected. The agency actively sought the opinions of young people and carers as part of the foster carer's annual review which gave them an opportunity to voice their views on the care provided. We saw several positive comments in consultation documents completed by young people on the care they received. One young person commented '*They are very understanding and helpful. I could not be any happier than I am now.*' Young people were also consulted with as part of the agency's review of quality of care via questionnaires, although the response had been disappointing, as only two were returned. Supervising social workers had good relationships with the children and young people in placement and their views were sought in placement visits. We also saw that formal processes were in place to obtain the views of children and young people e.g. at LAC reviews.

Young people remain in control because they are supported with difficult feelings and are helped to develop coping strategies. We saw that Cariad had organised a mentor for some young people which had been well received, as the mentor had been a previously looked after child who had successfully set up his own company 'In Awe'. As well as the support from his foster carers and staff this had been particularly helpful for one young person who was moving on to semi-independence and had increased his confidence.

Children are encouraged to achieve educationally as education is viewed as important by the agency and foster carers are given clear expectations about their roles in promoting the educational attainment of young people. This includes helping children and young people to develop self-esteem and build positive relationships with schools. Foster carers we spoke with told us of positive outcomes for young people who were attending school and doing well. One young person had won an achievement award from the college they attended. One young person had commented about the support from his foster carers, '*If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be in school anymore.*'

Children experience warmth, attachment and belonging. We observed children and young people interacting with their foster carers at the Achievements Awards ceremony and saw evidence of positive relationships that children and young people have with them. Children and young people presented awards to their foster carers as well as receiving them. They were written by the young people themselves and included comments such as '*Thank you for looking after me*', '*Thank you for being there when I need you the most*' and '*Thank you for playing with me and making me happy*'.

Children and young people are active, positively occupied and stimulated because the agency promotes access to a range of activities which promote their overall health and wellbeing. Cariad strived to ensure that children and young people were happy and felt included and had a sense of belonging to the agency. The agency had arranged 'fun' days during the school holidays, BBQ's, trips to the cinema, play centres, ice skating and Christmas parties. We were told about several achievements that young people had made which included, one young person being made captain of the school rugby team and one young person who had excelled in a National Horse Vaulting championship. We saw evidence that young people were very involved in family activities and able to pursue their individual interests with support from their foster carers e.g. sculpting, swimming and archery.

Children remain healthy because their needs are anticipated because foster carers are provided with good information about young people's health needs and are given clear information about how these should be addressed. Young people had access to health care as required and were supported to attend any health related appointments. The health care needs of young people were closely monitored by the agency and action taken to address these and to promote healthy living.

Children are supported to have contact / positive understanding of their birth family. We were told of several contact sessions children and young people attended with the support from Cariad and their foster carers. We saw evidence that one foster carer had been travelling long distances to ensure that the young children placed with them met with their family.

Quality Of Staffing

Foster carers feel confident in the advice and support they receive because staff are competent, experienced and knowledgeable and strive to make a positive difference to the outcomes for looked after children and young people.

Foster carers receive timely support and care because there is sufficient and appropriately experienced staff to support them. The team consisted of the registered manager who is also one of the directors of Cariad and three supervising social workers (SSW) who support foster carers within the agency, one of whom had joined the team in the last six months. The registered manager has a social work qualification having been qualified since 1994, has a management qualification and is registered with the Care Council for Wales (CCfW). All of the SSW's had a Diploma in Social Work and were registered with the CCfW. As well as being appropriately qualified all the staff had a wealth of experience and knowledge both in the fostering role and within different social work roles prior to joining the agency. The agency was supported by the responsible individual who is the office/finance manager and one of the directors of the agency.

Foster carers experience good communication and engagement with staff because foster carers we spoke with were highly complimentary of the support they received from the agency and the staff team. Foster carers spoke of receiving 'fantastic support' which included regular supervision and good out of hours support. We found evidence that foster carers were visited every two weeks and unannounced visits were undertaken by the agency manager. We saw several complimentary comments on the staff team in the review of quality of care report. One said '*An outstanding social worker in every area of her work. She is dedicated, wise experienced and humane.*' Another said '*I feel privileged to be part of Cariad. The ethos of the organisation is based on inclusivity, trust and openness. The focus is always on the young people.*'

Foster carers and children and young people can feel confident that they are supported by appropriate staff. We examined one staff recruitment file and found that all necessary checks had been undertaken appropriately. We met with the three SSW's who informed us that that supervision was undertaken formally on a bi-monthly basis and that annual appraisals were completed. Staff said that because they were such a small team they met informally almost daily with the manager and their colleagues. We were told that the manager provided excellent support and had an open door policy and they felt that they could speak to her at any time. We were told that formal supervision provided opportunities to discuss the support needs of individual children and foster carers and their own learning and development needs as well as an opportunity to discuss any personal issues.

Cariad had achieved the Evolve Exemplar Employer award from Chwarae Teg, and the Investors in People Award in 2012.

Quality Of Leadership and Management

Overall, we found that children, young people and foster carers benefit from a well-run service, that is clear about its purpose, committed to improvement and managed effectively

Foster carers are clear about what the fostering service sets out to provide with expectations about the service matched by their experience. We were provided with the Brochure and Statement of Purpose for the agency which had been updated in April 2015, which provided clear information about the agency's aims and objectives and service provision. Staff said they had read the service's statement of purpose, and foster carers told us that they considered the statement of purpose to be an accurate representation of the service. Foster carers were also provided with a handbook outlining the policies and procedures for Cariad fostering service. We were advised by foster carers we spoke with that the policies and procedures were 'live' documents and were discussed in meetings and updates and changes were clearly communicated via email. Regular meetings and support groups were held with foster carers which were used for consultation, training and information sharing. We saw that foster carer agreements set out, in detail, the expectations on both foster carers and the fostering service, to ensure that the needs of children were met within their placements.

Foster carers experience an improving service which they can rely upon, as systems are in place to monitor the quality of the service provided, and information obtained is used to inform service development. The agency has a robust quality assurance system in place which actively ensures they consult with foster carers, young people and local authorities as seen in the review of quality of care report completed in February 2015. We were told by foster carers that they felt that Cariad acted upon any issues that were raised and felt that they were listened to. E.g. the agency responded when they had a trainer which had not met their needs and changed the trainer. Also, we were told by foster carers that the format of support groups had changed as a result of their comments which said that they lacked direction, but had now changed and were more focussed and structured and often involved guest speakers.

The manager informed us that the majority of annual reviews for foster carers had been held within compliance of the regulations. There were a few which were overdue by a few weeks because one of the SSW's had been off on sick leave; however this was now being rectified with those that were overdue being prioritised.

We did not attend the fostering panel at this inspection as the last inspection evidenced that Cariad's panel was effective and robust in its decision making. Questionnaires returned from panel members did not raise any issues.

Quality Of The Carers

Overall, we found that children can be confident that they are supported by competent, and motivated foster carers who want to help looked after children and young people reach their potential.

Children and young people experience positive relationships with their foster carers, and a sense of belonging. 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. Foster carers spoke about Cariad as being part of a 'large family.' Foster carers said because the agency was so small they knew all the staff team well, including the registered manager and the responsible individual. They said that they also knew each other well, as did the children and young people. This was particularly evident at the agency's annual achievements award ceremony. Foster carers also said this was particularly helpful if children and young people needed respite as this was seen as a 'holiday' with other foster carers they were already familiar with.

Children experience stability because the majority of the placements with Cariad foster carers are long term. We saw that the agency promoted permanency for the children and young people placed with the agency. It was commendable that as in previous inspections the agency were supporting the possible adoption of two children by their foster carers and that the agency had supported foster carers who had secured a special guardianship order on two children, ensuring permanence for those children.

Children are matched appropriately. 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. We found that the foster carers we met with had provided very positive and stable placements for the children and young people they cared for.

Children were placed in foster carers homes that were safe and monitored on a regular basis by their SSW. 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 were in place to support the safety of children in placement. 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.

Children and young people can be confident that the foster carers who are caring for them are offered a comprehensive training programme both during recruitment and after

approval. Foster carers we spoke with said that they were provided with a lot of training and had an input into what training they needed. All foster carers were encouraged and supported to access the Quality and Credit Framework (QCF) accredited training.

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 Safeguarding/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.

How we inspect and report on services

We conduct two types of inspection; baseline and focussed. Both consider the experience of people using services.

- **Baseline inspections** assess whether the registration of a service is justified and whether the conditions of registration are appropriate. For most services, we carry out these inspections every three years. Exceptions are registered child minders, out of school care, sessional care, crèches and open access provision, which are every four years.

At these inspections we check whether the service has a clear, effective Statement of Purpose and whether the service delivers on the commitments set out in its Statement of Purpose. In assessing whether registration is justified inspectors check that the service can demonstrate a history of compliance with regulations.

- **Focused inspections** consider the experience of people using services and we will look at compliance with regulations when poor outcomes for people using services are identified. We carry out these inspections in between baseline inspections. Focused inspections will always consider the quality of life of people using services and may look at other areas.

Baseline and focused inspections may be scheduled or carried out in response to concerns.

Inspectors use a variety of methods to gather information during inspections. These may include;

- Talking with people who use services and their representatives
- Talking to staff and the manager
- Looking at documentation
- Observation of staff interactions with people and of the environment
- Comments made within questionnaires returned from people who use services, staff and health and social care professionals

We inspect and report our findings under 'Quality Themes'. Those relevant to each type of service are referred to within our inspection reports.

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