



Arolygiaeth Gofal a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol Cymru  
Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

## Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

# Inspection Report

Cardiff County Council Fostering Service

Cardiff

Type of Inspection – Focussed

Date(s) of inspection – 01 and 02 and 03 February 2016

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## Summary

### About the service

Gary Fear is the person appointed by the City of Cardiff Council to manage its fostering service. Its offices are in St Mellons, Cardiff.

At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 119 children placed with 125 fostering households approved by the service. This included;

- 21 children placed in kinship placements and
- 104 children in mainstream placements

The process for inspecting the authority's arrangements for private fostering is separate to this inspection process.

### What type of inspection was carried out?

This routine and focussed inspection was undertaken between 10am and 4pm on 1<sup>st</sup> February; 12pm and 4pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> February and 10am and 4pm on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016. The visits on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of February were announced and the visit on 2<sup>nd</sup> of February was unannounced. The following methodology was employed;

- we viewed a sample of relevant documents and records and
- held discussions with foster carers, staff and managers of the kinship and mainstream aspects of the service

### What does the service do well?

The service has retained a core group of experienced staff and foster carers and provided suitably matched and stable placements for children.

### What has improved since the last inspection?

These are some of the improvements since the last inspection;

- there were plans for the fostering teams to develop their role in consulting with children and monitoring their progress
- a range of initiatives had been employed to improve engagement between the foster carers and the local authority

### What needs to be done to improve the service?

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The following recommendations are made to support the ongoing improvement of the service;

- that systems are established to monitor review and improve the quality of care given to children
- that the quality of care review reports are made readily available to appropriate stakeholders
- that up to date information is given to children about their placements and their rights and entitlements
- that systems are established for monitoring the educational attainment, progress and school attendance of children placed with foster carers approved by the fostering service
- that managers review risk assessment procedures and make decisions about the respective roles of case managing and fostering social workers in assessing and managing any risks associated with caring for the children
- that managers monitor any difficulties or delays for children accessing support services to establish if improvements are necessary
- to continue to improve the opportunities for engaging with children to better understand their views about their care and any improvements they feel could be made

## Quality Of Life

Overall, we found that the systems to monitor and provide evidence based information about the quality of life and the views and progress of the children needed significant improvement.

A report intended to comply with Regulation 42 (dated 1.4.2014 to 31.3.2015) provided information about children's care plans, permanence plans, LAC Reviews, placement moves and education. This information however was not in regard to the children placed with carers approved by the fostering service but the wider population of children 'looked after' by the authority. The report provided no evidence of the findings of consultation with the children, their parents or other stakeholders about the quality of care provided by the service. On that basis, evidence showed that the fostering service had not established suitable systems to monitor review and improve the quality of the care of the children. The need for improvement in this area has been identified at previous inspections.

The manager said they had struggled to establish a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the service in meeting the needs of the children but said that they had since made progress in this area. They said that the fostering social workers had started to implement processes for consulting with the children and for monitoring their development during their visits to carers and that they would be gathering information from the children's and carers' reviews and other consultation processes to inform the quality of care review and the ongoing improvement of the service. They acknowledged the need to encourage the children and others to engage constructively in this process and to make reports of this review available to them.

Whilst there was some information available in relation to the educational progress of children 'looked after' by the authority, information to demonstrate the attendance, progress and academic attainment of children placed with carers approved by the fostering service was not available. The regulations and national minimum standards require that information is to be gathered to demonstrate the effectiveness of the service in promoting the educational progress and outcomes of the children. The need for improvement in this area has been identified at previous inspections.

A young person's guide was available to provide information for children. Most of the information in the guide was helpful though the contact details and the description of the role of the CSSIW were several years out of date. A new young person's guide had since been produced in conjunction with an independent advocacy provider.

At the last inspection, we found that some carers had compiled 'foster carer profiles' to give information to children about their homes, their lifestyles and their families. We recommended that managers considered whether all carers should be asked to compile such information to give to the children placed with them. The manager said they had not asked them to do that.

Feedback from foster carers and fostering social workers indicated that the matching of children with foster carers had been generally good and that initial placement meetings were held where possible; to ensure that children were suitably placed and that their support needs were made clear. We were told that foster placement agreements were generally completed and included the objectives to be attained in regard to the children. Those checked provided clarity about the objectives to be attained on behalf of the children and the respective roles of those involved. Records of the visits made by the fostering social workers and discussion with them, demonstrated a clear focus on the wellbeing of the children. The records of foster carer reviews showed that children had been consulted as well as their case managing social workers and their feedback indicated that children had been provided good support from their carers. Some of the fostering social workers said they sometimes undertook reviews to monitor the degree to which the objectives of foster placement agreements were being fulfilled for the children.

We enquired about the systems employed for risk assessment and asked to see risk assessment for carers taking a child on holiday. Discussion indicated that some felt this was the role of case managing social workers; some felt this was a routine aspect of the role of foster carers and would not require a specific written risk assessment and some felt there was a need for written risk assessment in regard to any known or likely risks associated with caring for the children. We recommend that managers review their risk assessment procedures and make clear decisions about the respective roles of case managing and fostering social workers in assessing and managing any risks associated with caring for the children.

Feedback from carers and staff about accessing support services for children indicated that many of the children had received very good support to promote their positive development. What they said also indicated that there were sometimes delays and difficulties in accessing the support children needed to fulfil their potential. They also said that whilst some carers and social workers campaigned to ensure children accessed the support they needed; this was not always the case. We recommend that managers consider any instances where children experience delays or difficulties in accessing support services to establish if improvements are necessary.

The authority had promoted a range of opportunities for young people to receive continuing accommodation and support after the age of 18 which included supported lodgings with their ex foster carers.

## Quality Of Staffing

The focus of this inspection was on the quality of life and the quality of the care of the children. The quality of the staffing of the service was not considered in detail.

It was confirmed that there were no staff vacancies and that two additional staff had been appointed to support the work of the team.

Feedback from the mainstream and kinship foster carers about the staff supporting them was very positive.

## Quality Of Leadership and Management

The focus of this inspection was on the quality of life and the quality of the care of the children. The quality of the leadership and management of the service was not considered in detail.

We were informed that plans were in place to separate the management and staffing responsibilities for the mainstream and kinship aspects of the service. Feedback indicated that there was a need to ensure there was clarity for staff about the roles and responsibilities of their managers and their respective lines of accountability.

## Quality Of The Carers

We held separate discussions with a group of 5 foster carers providing mainstream placements and 2 foster carers providing kinship care.

Overall, their feedback indicated that they had received very good support and training from the fostering service and that the children placed with them were making good progress.

At the last inspection, some foster carers said they had not always been treated with sufficient regard by other workers involved with the children they cared for. We felt this had impacted on their morale and recommended that managers address this issue. The managers told us at this inspection that considerable effort had since been made to improve engagement with and the morale of their carers. They said that some had since met with the director and other senior managers in the local authority and that some had been involved in initiatives to recruit new carers and to provide them mentoring support.

Quarterly news letters had been sent to all carers in paper and electronic formats and coffee mornings, 'lunch and learn' sessions and activity based events had been arranged for carers and children to attend. A foster carers' celebration event took had taken place in November 2015 to acknowledge their achievements and to consult with them about the ongoing development of the service.

The mainstream carers we met with acknowledged these improvements but some said they continued to feel that some case managing social workers did not appear to acknowledge or value their skills and experience as foster carers or the commitments they made to the children. It was confirmed that managers and carers had made plans to improve communication and working relationships between case managing social workers and the foster carers.

Feedback about foster carer training was positive and in particular, in relation to 'the Fostering Changes' training programme'. A training need analysis had been undertaken to review and improve the training available to carers and a steering group had been created to involve them in the ongoing development of the service.

Positive feedback was received from the kinship carers we met. They said they had received very good support and training from the fostering service and that this had enabled them to meet the support needs of the children who were making good developmental progress. We heard that one of the children had needed to move schools but had since achieved ten GCSEs and was considering attending university. These carers felt that access to support services for the children needed improvement. The fostering social workers said that the commitment and dedication these carers had made to the children had been commendable.

Managers and staff confirmed that the majority of foster carer reviews had been undertaken and that all carers had received at least one unannounced annual visit.

## 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. Focussed 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.

Further information about what we do can be found in our leaflet 'Improving Care and Social Services in Wales'. You can download this from our website, [Improving Care and Social Services in Wales](#) or ask us to send you a copy by telephoning your local CSSIW regional office.