



Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

Inspection Report

Powys Fostering

Llandrindod Wells

Type of inspection – Focused

Dates of inspection – Tuesday, 12 January and Wednesday, 13 January 2016

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Summary

About the service

The Powys fostering service is part of the Children's Services Department of Powys County Council and based in two offices in Brecon and Newtown. The fostering team are responsible for the recruitment, assessment and support of foster carers, as well as contributing to the matching of children and young people looked after by Powys County Council to suitable foster carers. The self assessment of service statement (SASS) indicated that at the time of inspection there were 74 approved foster carers able to provide 193 places. At the time of completion of the Data Collection Form prior to the inspection, the agency had 90 young people placed with their foster carers, 17 in kinship care and 3 pre-adoptive placements. The authority also had written delegation agreements under regulation 40(4) with several independent fostering agencies and 17 children were placed with these agencies at the time of inspection. The manager of the fostering team is Lisa Hocking and the Head of Children's Services is Pauline Higham.

What type of inspection was carried out?

This was a planned annual focused inspection carried out as part of the scheduled annual programme of inspections carried out by two inspectors on 12 and 13 January 2016. The inspection focused upon the Quality of Life and the Quality of the Foster Carers using the following methods:

- Scrutiny of Self Assessment of Service Statement (SASS) completed by the managers prior to inspection
- Meeting with members of the staff team
- Meeting with the manager of the team
- Meeting with four foster carers
- Meeting with social workers working with children placed in foster care
- Scrutiny of a random selection of files and documentation at the service
- Examination of minutes of panel meetings and observation of the panel.

What does the service do well?

- The service has an experienced fostering team providing the assessment and support to foster carers.
- The staff team is motivated to ensure good outcomes for young people.

What has improved since the last inspection?

- Annual reviews were up to date and the quality of the reviews was good containing comprehensive information and involved good consultation
- The majority of placements had been made in-house with some carers managing very complex behaviours
- Training opportunities and attendance had improved.

What needs to be done to improve the service?

There was no requirement to issue any non-compliance notices as a result of this inspection.

It was identified that the fostering team would be strengthened by the appointment of the

principal social worker in the Brecon office.

Quality Of Life

Overall, we (CSSIW) found that children and young people living in foster placements within Powys Fostering are treated with dignity and respect and they have choice and influence. This is because all young people are given a children's guide upon admission which contained details and advice about how to complain, along with details of advocacy services which they could access provided by Tros Gynnal. Young people are written to independently by the staff in Tros Gynnal to remind them of their right to advocacy and this is supported by the Boo newsletter. Supporting social workers ensured that young people were seen alone on some visits and they also undertook unannounced visits to foster carer's homes. The young people were encouraged to attend their Looked After Children (LAC) reviews and there was evidence of young people speaking to the independent reviewing officer. The annual reviews scrutinised gave evidence of consultation with young people, both those placed and the birth children of carers and these comments contributed to the decisions made. The agency had a participation officer placed within the leaving care team, and they had a strategy in place working towards meeting the national participation standards. The junior safeguarding board had representation from the LAC population and care leavers in the group called 'Eat Carrots Be Safe From Elephants'. Information for young people would be provided through the medium of Welsh if requested.

Children on the whole experience well being and a sense of achievement. This is because the placement of a child also took account of the locality to maintain educational routine when that was appropriate through the placement request form. There was evidence of foster carers advocating on behalf of the children in their care with education. Carers also spoke of the positive support provided to young people from the LAC education worker. Discussion with foster carers looking after children of school age confirmed a commitment to regular attendance in education and support to complete homework. There were very positive examples of young people going to university from their foster placement and the carers provided supported living for the holiday periods. Those with children below school age talked of stimulation through play.

Examination of records confirmed that young people are active, following a range of interests according to individual preference. Powys provided free sports passes for young people to engage in the community. Panel was also observed to note age appropriate activities when carrying out annual reviews. Powys holds annual LAC Awards for young people to recognise their achievements. Discussion with carers and examination of records also confirmed that young people enjoyed the opportunity to participate in a range of activities, which included the first opportunity for a young person to travel abroad. The leaving care team also organised annual residential events for all children aged sixteen years and over. Supervising social workers discussed and recorded the activities undertaken by young people during their monthly supervisions with foster carers. Discussion with foster carers confirmed that some young people were well integrated into their community whereas others with more complex needs had a limited opportunity; however carers were imaginative in ensuring that young people were not bored.

Children remain healthy because their needs are anticipated and they are enabled to

have access to specialist or medical support. All young people were registered for health care in their own geographic locality. All children had a medical on admission to care and these were followed by annual visits from the LAC nurse. Input from the LAC nurse commenced at the 'Skills to Foster' training. The support of the LAC nurses was welcomed by carers as in addition to offering advice, they were also able to liaise with school nurses and support applications to TAITH or CAMHS if required. The foster carers also had access to a psychologist to support them in their work with young people displaying complex behaviours. There were several examples of the foster carers working directly with a multi-disciplinary team around the young person to ensure the most appropriate intervention to meet individual need. There was also evidence that the young people were supported by carers who had received additional training to meet specific need. Healthy lifestyles were encouraged although healthy eating was more difficult to achieve with some teenagers there was evidence of it being promoted. One foster family had set up Skype to contact the birth family as they provided respite care and this enabled the birth family to see how their child was progressing on days away from them.

Children experience warmth, attachment and belonging. There was evidence of carers working with birth families and many were prepared to transport young people to ensure contact went ahead. Foster carers also had the opportunity for training in attachment which gave further insight into how the young people felt and the reasons for some behaviours. There was evidence of foster carers working well with prospective adopters to ensure a smooth transition and advocating on behalf of the child in placement to ensure the move was completed at a pace the child was comfortable with. Foster carers had also been praised by the Court for the detail of their recording in relation to a parent and baby placement. Carers spoken to demonstrated a huge commitment to young people placed with them who had complex health care needs and were able to maintain a homely environment. Feedback from a social worker was that "care provided is excellent. Carers are experienced in managing difficult behaviours – they have been able to implement firm boundaries and keep the young person safe whilst also offering a warm nurturing environment". A young person also fed back that the carers "have seen me right from the start and been with me for all the struggles in between".

Quality Of Staffing

This inspection focused on the experience of young people using the service and their quality of life when placed by the agency with foster carers along with the quality of foster carers. CSSIW did not consider it necessary to look at the quality of staffing on this occasion because:

- The fostering team is well established with little turnover
- Foster carers spoke highly of the supervising social workers and the team as a whole
- There was positive feedback about the change in the out of hours arrangements which had brought more stability in staffing
- The supervising social workers spoken to were motivated and committed to their role
- Supervising social workers had produced comprehensive annual review reports
- Staff spoke positively about always finding a foster placement in the last year and they had not used any bed and breakfast placements even in emergencies
- Children's social workers and supervising social workers talked about good examples of working together, and supervising social workers had taken on some of the responsibility of the child's social workers at times of absence.

Quality Of Leadership And Management

This inspection focused on the experience of young people using the service and their quality of life in foster care along with the quality of foster carers. CSSIW did not consider it necessary to look at the quality of leadership and management on this occasion because:

- The team had an experienced, qualified manager who had been in post for many years
- The social workers spoken to spoke highly of the support they received from the team manager
- The authority provided an apprenticeship scheme within the council and had produced a digi-film of a young person who had progressed through the scheme to achieve NVQ qualifications in the building trade
- The team had increased the number of staff able to verify DBS checks to speed up the process. The current system identified when DBS checks needed to be completed three months before the date. Some of these checks were still not being completed prior to the expiry of the previous check but as stated the agency had taken steps to address this.

It was noted that:

- A principal officer post had been held in the South team and the impact of this was that senior staff had to cover and the team manager did not have as much support for their role as needed. It is important for the future development of the team and the recruitment of future foster carers that the team is fully established.

Quality Of The Carers

Children feel confident in the care they receive because carers are competent and confident in meeting their particular needs. All carers undertake a comprehensive assessment which is taken to the panel for approval. The panel comprised of individuals with a range of experience and all contributed to the decision making process. Panel members were observed to make assessments and also ask for further information to ensure they made informed choices. The minutes examined confirmed that all approvals and reviews were scrutinised appropriately. A Form F assessment was presented to the panel observed by the inspector and it was discussed with the team manager. The quality assurance procedure had not been followed on this occasion and the report might not have been presented had this been the case, as there was some information missing. This information was asked for by the panel when the applicants attended the meeting and the panel members were confident in the response they received. The manager advised the inspectors that the staff had been informed that the quality assurance procedure must be followed on all occasions in the future. There was clear discussion about the age range and type of approval to ensure that the matching process would provide appropriate placements for young people. The agency introduced the requirement to contact CSSIW about applicants, as a part of their routine checks following the inspection visit.

Children enjoy being cared for by motivated foster carers and want to make a positive difference to their lives. The carers spoken to were passionate about their role and spoke highly of their preparation for the role and support from their supporting social workers. Children's social workers spoke about how carers had welcomed a young person into their care and treated them with care, love, dignity and respect and had also shown the same to the parents. To ensure a young person settled the bedroom replicated their own at home as far as possible and the young person's mother stayed at the carers home on the first night of respite.

Children are matched appropriately because there is a range of placements. Social workers discussed their experience of good placements being found with a low breakdown. When a breakdown had occurred the team were able to find a good match for the young person in the locality which had enabled them to re-establish their relationship with the first set of carers who now provided respite care. Social workers did express concern that foster carers were being asked to manage far more complex behaviours and whilst some had thrived upon this there had been anxieties at placement. The agency had still identified a need to recruit more carers in the south of the county and this targeted recruitment was planned for the year ahead.

How we inspect and report on services

We conduct two types of inspection; baseline and focused. 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.

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.