



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

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

Inspection Report

Independent Foster Care Services

Spring Meadow Business Park
Wentloog Road
Rumney
CF3 2ES

Type of Inspection – Announced and Focussed
Date(s) of inspection – 13 December 2012
Date of publication – 23 February 2013

You may reproduce this Report in its entirety. You may not reproduce it in part or in any abridged form and may only quote from it with the consent in writing of Welsh Ministers

Please contact CSSIW National Office for further information
Tel: 0300 062 8800
Email: cssiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk
www.cssiw.org.uk

Summary

About the service

IFCS is an IFA (Independent Fostering Agency) which has been registered with CSSIW since 2004. The registered provider is Adrian Wilson and the registered manager is Gail Tobin.

The agency provides placements to South Wales' local authorities with foster carers across the South Wales area and has offices in Cardiff and Swansea.

At the time of this inspection 142 children were placed with 118 approved foster carers. There had been 206 admissions and 188 departures in the twelve months prior to this inspection.

What type of inspection was carried out?

The inspection was a routine annual and focussed inspection.

The following methodology was employed and informs the findings of this report;

- Review of the agency's self assessment
- Review of the agency's report on the review of the quality of care provided
- Discussion and review of some records, policies and procedures
- Consultation with children, foster carers, staff and managers within the agency

What does the service do well?

IFCS have continuously developed resources and systems for staffing and managing the agency and for monitoring and providing evidence of its performance. The findings of their consultation and monitoring indicate that the quality of its foster carers and the quality of care received by children have continuously strengthened as a result.

What has improved since the last inspection?

In particular, improvement has been made to the systems employed to support effective placement making and for monitoring the experience and outcomes of the children they care for.

Evidence of good practice is commonly seen within IFCS and their commitment to continuing improvement is acknowledged.

What needs to be done to improve the service?

Quality of life

IFCS have well established and rigorous processes to monitor and consult with children about their quality of life and experience in placement. They are consulted with as part of each visit made by the agency's supervising Social Worker and written record is made of their comments which are discussed within their individual supervision. A summary of their comments was considered as part of this inspection which in the main indicates that children and young people are suitably placed and satisfied with their care. It is encouraging that where children expressed any element of dissatisfaction that the agency has been keen to positively respond to and learn from what they had to say. It was confirmed that they had been consulted as part of the annual review process of their foster carers and as part of the review undertaken in respect of the quality of care they receive. Their inspection questionnaires provided very positive feedback which indicated that they were happy with their carers, their opportunities for social and leisure activities and the support they receive to pursue their education. They also confirmed that they had received good information about being placed with foster carers and about how to make a complaint. The service has established links with independent advocacy services to provide support for children who wish to make complaints.

The service actively promotes the positive welfare of young people and examples of this include the promotion of their education and community based leisure activities. Their focus on education has been emphasised and integrated within foster carer training and children's school attendance, progress and academic attainment are monitored on an individual and collective basis to support continuous improvement in this area. They provide financial support for a wide range of children's hobbies and for several years have run a weekly youth club at their offices in Cardiff. The youth club includes opportunities for young people to take guitar lessons, arts and crafts and a radio studio but perhaps most importantly, it was clear that the agency recognises that the youth club provides positive opportunities for children that supports their positive self esteem, sense of well being and fulfilment.

The service has shown considerable evidence of its efforts to safeguard children and there has been a significant increase in their reporting of such concerns. They have doubled the amount of child protection training provided to foster carers and staff and risk assessment processes have been continuously improved to respond to the high risks sometimes associated with their role.

The service recognises the importance of effective placement making and has made improvements within their placements as a result. Notwithstanding the improvements they have made, they continue to campaign for better information from placing authorities to inform placement making and matching.

The agency is currently planning to align their outcome definitions for children with those used by their contracting framework to better reflect the overall effectiveness of their efforts to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Quality of staffing

The service has been proactive in strengthening staffing resources in accordance with the incremental increase in the numbers of young people and foster carers. Consultation indicates that the service employs adequate number of suitable staff to achieve good practice across the range of its responsibilities. It employs twenty qualified Social Workers, ten business support staff and has secured access to the services of specialist advisers including legal, educational and health.

The agency has developed various systems to consult with foster carers including face to face meetings with the registered manager and responsible individual. They state that these meetings have been invaluable to inform their efforts to continuously improve the service and one such example has been to the placements team to provide better information and communication with foster carers. A summary of this consultation provided in their self assessment indicates that foster carers are entirely satisfied with the support and advice they receive. Feedback within inspection questionnaires was very positive and supports that view.

Staff retention has been particularly good and supported their professional experience and development as well as the consistency of support they provide to foster carers. It indicates that they are satisfied in their positions and discussion with them at this and previous inspections indicates that they are committed in their roles as individuals and in support of the aims of IFCS to continuously improve their ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Managers and staff confirmed that staff supervision is rigorous and focussed on outcomes for children as well as staff performance and development. Evidence has also been seen that IFCS have responded decisively if any questions about staff performance have been raised.

Quality of leadership and management

The registered manager of IFCS has been in post since its registration in 2004 and has been supported and monitored by the registered provider and owner - director.

The management structure has developed proportionately and commensurate with the year on year growth of the service. There is a clear structure with managers having specific areas of responsibility to support the overall effectiveness and development of the service.

Feedback during this and previous inspections indicate that the management of the agency is strong and with a clear and consistent emphasis on facilitating and supporting positive experience and outcomes for young people.

Systems to support the continuous improvement of the service have been subject to ongoing development and in particular recognise the benefit of consultation with children, foster carers, staff and responsible local authorities. The service has invested in a data base to assist in its gathering and analysis of information to inform the continuous improvement of the service. The quality of care review report was seen at the previous inspection with a new report being due after the completion of this inspection.

Quality of Foster Carers

As in other areas, IFCS have invested well in the recruitment and development of its foster carers. They have 118 foster carers with 28 new carers being recruited in 2012. As with staff retention, foster carer retention has also been very good. Their self assessment indicates that no foster carers have left expressly to join another agency and that only a small number had left due to other reasons; for instance as a result of a young person leaving their long term care to live independently.

The agency have developed comprehensive systems to monitor the quality of care provided to children and have devised consultation systems with 10 outcome headings to assist them in measuring their performance. These headings include 'how is your foster carer at making you feel part of their family', a matter included in Schedule 5; the obligations to be set out in foster care agreements. IFCS have adopted this as one of ten performance indicators they have been measuring since 2008. The annual scoring to date has not been below 9.5 and was 10 in 2012.

Placement breakdown has also been measured. 29 placements ended in less than 7 days in 2011 and this reduced to 13 in 2012 despite a higher number of children being placed and with many having complex needs and challenging behaviours. The agency acknowledges that placement breakdowns will inevitably occur but are committed to making continuing improvement in this area. They have recognised that improvement is necessary to the information provided by placing authorities and in particular when placements are made out of hours and on an emergency basis.

Feedback from children within IFCS monitoring systems and in inspection questionnaires indicates that the quality of foster carers provided by the agency is good.

The fostering panel was not attended on this occasion though managers confirmed that its members remained within the permitted tenure of their respective roles.

Minutes of recent panel proceedings did not state the reasons for its recommendations, the role being fulfilled by its members or whether meetings were quorate. These matters were noted at the previous inspection and it was agreed that they would be dealt with. The inspector was advised that this had been an unintended oversight and assurance given that this would be dealt with.

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.

- **Focussed 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 focussed 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.