

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

Care Standards Act 2000

Inspection Report

Independent Foster Care Services
Solva House
Spring Meadow Business Park
Wentloog Road
Rumney
CF3 2ES

Type of Inspection – Baseline

Date(s) of inspection – Wednesday, 25 February 2015 and Thursday, 26 February 2015

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Summary

About the service

IFCS was first registered as an Independent Fostering Agency in 2004 and has offices in Cardiff and Swansea. The registered provider is IFCS Ltd; the registered manager is Gail Tobin and a responsible individual has been nominated.

IFCS provides placements for children mostly from South Wales' local authorities, with foster carers across the South and South West Wales areas.

At the time the inspection 151 children were in placements with 129 fostering households.

What type of inspection was carried out?

The was a routine baseline inspection and the following methodology was employed;

- review of the statement of purpose, children's guide, the review of the quality of care and associated documentation and records
 - consultation with carers, staff and managers at the Swansea and Cardiff offices
- consultation with the registered manager and responsible individual

What does the service do well?

The ethos of the agency appeared to be characterised by a genuine desire to improve the lives of the children and its ability to safeguard and promote their welfare.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Evidence indicated that their ability to monitor and improve the quality of care and developmental progress of the children had significantly improved. Significant investment had also made in the training programme for foster carers and staff.

What needs to be done to improve the service?

The agency's own systems for monitoring, reviewing and improving its effectiveness were very well developed. No recommendations are made for improvement.

Quality Of Life

Evidence indicated that the ethos of the agency was clearly focussed on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children.

We (the CSSIW) met with two groups of foster carers and what they said indicated that their approach was child centred and that they were committed to understanding and meeting their individual support needs. They said they received good support from the agency when considering the suitability of any children proposed for placement and to determine whether they were able to meet their particular needs.

They demonstrated an insight into the reasons the children needed to understand their current and previous circumstances; to have positive and sustainable relationships and to make positive plans for their futures. They said that the agency was committed to improving the quality of life of the children. They told us about the youth clubs the agency provided at their Cardiff and Swansea offices and said these provided opportunities for the children to socialise and to take part in activities such as arts and crafts and computer and guitar lessons. They said that they felt it was important to take the children out on trips and on family holidays and for them to experience a sense of belonging in their placements. They also told us of children being supported to take driving lessons and of some remaining with their carers as young adults.

The 'welcome guide' for the children was seen to be empowering of the children and emphasised the commitment the agency would make to them rather than what it might expect of them.

The agency employed an outcome based system to monitor the children's personal development on an individual and collective basis. The children, their carers and fostering Social Workers all contributed to this process which enabled the agency to identify and provide any additional support the children needed. The report on the quality of care for 2014 showed that their progress had been consistently good and that the improvements identified as necessary in their previous review had been made. These included the promotion of the children's self care skills and further development of the arrangements for safeguarding the children. The overall scores in the 2014 review were all within the range of 91% and 99%, indicating that the children were making good progress in each aspect of their development. The report of their review is available upon request from the agency.

We saw evidence of various forms of consultation with the children which included the review of their care plans; the review of their foster carers' approval and activity based consultation events. All of the feedback we saw indicated that children had received good support from their carers and that their views were listened to and given due regard.

We saw detailed individual risk assessments and staff and carers said that the training they received in safeguarding was comprehensive and multi faceted.

Overall, evidence indicated that the agency had been effective in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children and that they had been supported to achieve good developmental outcomes.

Quality Of Staffing

All staff employed by the agency were suitably qualified and had considerable child care and fostering experience.

The staffing structure was comprehensive and included one dedicated placement team and a team of fostering Social Workers and support workers in each of the two offices. Additional staffing included business support staff, youth club staff and consultants for education, family therapy, training and IT and a medical advisor. Some independent Social Workers had been employed to undertake foster carers' assessments.

The Social Workers in both offices said their caseloads were appropriate for them to maintain good standards of professional practice and feedback from foster carers indicated they achieved that. They said that the Social Workers were dedicated and had the knowledge and skills to support them in their role, including during 'out of office hours'.

Staff at both offices said that they had received good support for their training and that staff motivation and teamwork were excellent.

The manager said that the constitution of the fostering panel complied with regulations and that its proceedings had only taken place when quorate. The fostering panel was not attended.

Overall, evidence indicated the quality of staffing was very good.

Quality Of Leadership and Management

The registered manager had managed the agency since its registration in 2004 and had appropriate experience and qualifications; including the necessary management qualification.

In addition, there were two Deputy Service Managers, an Office Manager, Finance and Personnel Manager and a Review and Quality and Control Manager.

The registered manager demonstrated an approach that acknowledged each of the children as individuals and said that they had met most of them. They had attended a rolling programme of consultation groups with carers and with children to listen to their views and attended their youth clubs on a frequent basis. The ethos of the agency appeared to be characterised by a genuine desire to improve the lives of the children and its ability to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Feedback from carers and staff indicated that they had confidence in the managers of the agency and a clear understanding of their expectation for them to provide high standards of foster care. Carers and staff said that they felt supported, valued and appreciated by their managers

The statement of purpose provided clear information about the operation and resourcing of the agency, including its aims and objectives.

Comprehensive systems were in place for monitoring and improving the quality of care provided, which included well developed systems for consultation and monitoring the children's progress. These systems enabled managers and staff to monitor the development of the children on an individual and agency wide basis and to monitor and improve their outcomes.

Overall, we found that the management and leadership of the agency had been effective in providing high standards of foster care to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children.

Quality Of The Carers

The carers that contributed to the inspection demonstrated a commitment to the ethos of the agency; to provide high standards of care for the children.

They understood the need to care for them in the context of their wider family circumstances and to promote their right to a good quality of life. They told us of examples of the support they had provided children with some of their personal challenges and how on occasions, they had needed to look beyond their presenting behaviours.

They conveyed an understanding of the risks associated with the children and said the training and support they received from the agency to safeguard them and to improve their lives was 'amazing'. Some said that they had appreciated the telephone calls they had received from the agency just to check if they were ok and some said they knew their efforts were always appreciated by the agency.

They said they had received comprehensive training for their roles in general and if providing any particular placements, such as parent and child placement.

Managers said that all foster carers had received unannounced visits by their supervising Social Workers and that all of their reviews had been undertaken as necessary.

Overall, evidence indicated that the quality of foster care provided to the children had been very good.

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.