



Inspection Report on

Family Fostering Partners Ltd

**Unit 1 Block B
Llys Y Barcud
Clos Gelliwerdd
Llanelli
SA14 6RX**

Mae'r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

This report is also available in Welsh

Date Inspection Completed

15/08/2023

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About Family Fostering Partners Ltd

Type of care provided	Fostering Service
Registered Provider	Family Fostering Partners Ltd
Registered places	Not applicable
Language of the service	Welsh and English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	N/A
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	The service provides an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It anticipates, identifies and meets the Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use, the service.

Summary

Family Fostering Partners is a service which clearly places children's well-being at the centre of everything it does. Children experience good quality care from skilled, dedicated foster carers who provide stability and suitable responses to children's needs. Children's education and health is prioritised and both foster carers and staff are strong advocates for children's rights.

The agency places a high value on supporting foster carers to develop their resilience and skills through comprehensive training and fortnightly visits to foster homes. There is a team of dedicated and enthusiastic staff who themselves are well supported by a knowledgeable and committed management team.

The service's governance and quality assurance arrangements are sound. Policies and procedures are in place and straightforward. There are clear lines of accountability and defined staff roles. The service provider ensures safe recruitment practices are followed and staff described a thorough induction process. There have been several changes of manager and other staff in the past year or so, but the staff team is now established and working effectively and cohesively.

Well-being

Children are able to express their views and make choices in line with their level of understanding and maturity. Link workers include observations of children and their views in records of their visits to foster homes and they contribute to annual reviews of foster carers. The responsible individual engages with children during social events. Children are made aware that an independent advocate can visit them to discuss issues, and they are encouraged and supported to attend their Children Looked After Reviews or have their wishes represented on their behalf. The service provider is developing ways to consult children on a group basis.

Information about the service is available for children in an attractive booklet in Welsh and English. There is information about how to make a complaint or who to talk to if they have any worries. The service provider has prepared an information booklet for parents moving into parent and child placements, and there is a dedicated link worker with expertise and experience who supports these arrangements.

Children are engaged in education and are encouraged to develop to their full potential. It was evident from our discussions with staff and foster carers that education was a priority for the children being looked after. The agency provides training to help foster carers and staff understand educational systems and processes which also gives them confidence to challenge decisions where appropriate. Foster carers work in partnership with school staff to promote consistent care and responses. Pre-school children go to nurseries or playgroups if this is consistent with their well-being and development.

Children are supported to be as healthy as they can be. Their physical, emotional and psychological health needs are understood and addressed by their foster carers. Foster carers promote healthy lifestyles and structured routines to embed good personal hygiene practices. Children are registered with primary health care agencies. They attend regular appointments as necessary, and access more specialist services such as speech and language, occupational therapy or therapy if needed. The service provider previously commissioned the services of a therapist whose input and advice were highly valued as a support to link workers and foster carers. There is an active attempt to recruit a suitable person since the position became vacant.

Children do things that matter to them and have fun. Relationships with their families is promoted as long as this is consistent with their well-being and efforts are made to keep siblings together wherever possible. If appropriate, carers will supervise contacts and send videos and photos to birth family members. The service provider advocates for life story work to be undertaken with children and are in the process of providing additional training to

a support worker to undertake some of this work if agreed by the child's placing local authority.

Files showed children go to clubs and extra curricula activities such as swimming lessons and beavers. They have friends over for tea and go on school residential trips. They enjoy trips to parks and beaches and go on holidays with their foster carers. The fostering agency had also organised activities throughout the year for the children including a summer fun activity day, easter event and trips to 'Luminate' and a pantomime. Important events in children's lives are recognised and celebrated. For example, they receive an 'exam survival kit' before sitting exams or tests and sent a card to acknowledge progress which may be for relatively small achievements but represent significant progress for the particular child.

Care and Support

The service provider considers a wide range of views and information before determining there is a foster family with the character, skills, interests and abilities to meet children's needs and support them to achieve good outcomes. Children's records mostly contained the required documents, but a few had been in Family Fostering Partner placements for a considerable period and key local authority documents were missing. Assessments of the compatibility of children living together and the impact on foster carers require strengthening to ensure all the information and knowledge used when deciding on suitability of placements is captured.

Children are supported by foster carers who understand their needs and provide responsive care. They experience stability, warmth, and a sense of belonging. The responsible individual and staff spoke passionately of their desire to promote the stability of the children placed with foster carers, and we saw examples of creative and proactive measures successfully supporting children and foster carers and sustaining placements. Each child has a memory box and at their visits, link workers ensure carers and children are adding to these.

Children experience well-being and a sense of achievement because they are able to access opportunities to learn, follow interests and develop skills. This was evidenced in the records that the link workers make of the visits to the foster carers. Child progress reports completed monthly by link workers show topics such as learning/education, being healthy, family time, safeguarding, and independence skills are always considered. These form the basis of how the service provider monitors children's well-being outcomes which feed into children's Looked After Children reviews.

Children are safeguarded from harm and abuse. Children have individual risk assessments and safer care plans to support foster carers to provide safe and consistent standards of care and support. These are reviewed regularly or when a change occurs. Carers provide appropriate advice and guidance to children to help them keep themselves safe as they grow older and more independent. Carers and staff complete safeguarding training and supplementary training on specific issues such as missing from care and managing allegations. Appropriate actions are taken in response to actual or potential safeguarding issues and matters referred to social workers and safeguarding agencies as required. In response to feedback from foster carers, the service provider has developed additional support systems for foster carers subject to allegations but without compromising safeguarding procedures.

Environment

The agency operates from two offices. As part of the inspection we inspected the office in Cross Hands, West Wales.

The office premises are suitable and fit for purpose. To the downstairs is the staff office consisting of a large, shared room and two smaller offices. Upstairs is a large, bright conference/meeting room which is used for training, staff team meetings and foster panels. Records are stored securely, including password protected electronic records, in line with legislation. Health and safety checks are routinely carried out to ensure the premises remain safe to children, foster carers and staff to use. The landlord undertakes regular fire safety drills.

Foster carers' homes are assessed when they are recruited to determine their suitability in meeting children's needs. Supervising social workers visit homes routinely during announced and unannounced visits, which provide opportunity to assess the home environment. Standards of health and safety in foster carers' homes are considered as part of the formal annual review process, together with pet assessments to assess safety.

Leadership and Management

The service recruits, assesses and trains foster carers to ensure they have the required skills, values and resilience to meet children's needs. Prospective foster carers receive clear information and suitable training to prepare them for their fostering role. We reviewed several fostering panel records which on the whole evidence good scrutiny and decision-making for foster carers approval, changes of approval, and when concerns are raised regarding standards of care and support provided to children. However, in one case we found little evidence to support the panel's decision to make a significant change to a foster carer's approval status and the rationale for determining the carers would be able to meet a child's needs. The responsible individual acknowledged this, gave assurances as to future practice and a commitment to raise it with the panel in terms of their quality assurance function.

The service provider has good quality assurance systems and is committed to developing and improving the service it provides to children. There is an electronic record system which allows carers and staff to input information easily and contemporaneously. It provides a comprehensive record of foster carers and the children they look after, as well as a range of performance data.

The RI (responsible individual), head of fostering and fostering manager are very experienced and knowledgeable and positively involved with all aspects of the service. They take part in various activities throughout the year to ensure they have good oversight of the service including opportunities to meet and consult with children, carers and staff. This includes attending carer and children's events, foster carer support groups, staff meetings and foster panels. On an individual level the RI reviews carer and child case files and where appropriate attends carer annual reviews or carries out welfare visits to foster carers. This also ensure foster carers and children are familiar with the RI and reassures them that the RI is interested in them and they are valued. Recording these activities in a more formal and structured way including any outcomes or actions arising, would demonstrate more clearly how the RI meets their duty to monitor performance and use the information gathered to inform the quality-of-care review.

Quality of care reports are completed within timescale and include an analysis of data to understand and identify any patterns, trends or areas for improvement or development. Where actions are identified they should be assigned to a responsible person with timescales for completion to avoid drift or delay.

Children benefit from a service where the well-being and support of foster carers and staff is given priority. The majority of foster carers rated the support from the agency as "excellent" and "*the support provided works well*" with most feeling they could contact a member of staff any time. Aside from visits, the social workers phoned the carers regularly

and attended meetings with them. Carers know how to make a formal complaint should they feel they need to. There had been one complaint in the twelve months before the inspection which had been dealt with appropriately, including a home visit by the service and fostering managers to the carers home. A written response was provided at the conclusion and the matter resolved.

Staff and managers meet fortnightly to offer mutual support, and share information and ideas. This means staff across the agency from link workers to the RI know all the carers well; their circumstances, strengths and experience. Foster carers appreciate that whoever is on call at any time will have some knowledge of them and the children living with them.

Staff have regular, good quality, meaningful supervision from a line manager and annual appraisals and this was evidenced in the staff files that we checked. Supervision records were thorough in their content, including discussions regarding the foster carers on each link worker's caseload.

The service provider employs a training and development manager who delivers the majority of the training, sometimes with the assistance of foster carers and link workers. A comprehensive training schedule is in place for foster carers and staff. Foster carer training is often delivered to carers in one of three geographical areas. The training and development manager has close involvement with link workers and is knowledgeable about the carers and children, and tailors training to the particular issues and needs of the participants as well as drawing on their experience and skills. Training was highly valued by carers and staff.

Summary of Non-Compliance	
Status	What each means
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status

N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
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