

Care service inspection report

Carolina House Trust - Fostering

Fostering Service

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Telephone: 01382 561279 ext. 104

Type of inspection: Announced (Short Notice)

Inspection completed on: 23 April 2015



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Service provided by:

Carolina House Trust

Service provider number:

SP2003001613

Care service number:

CS2004084075

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Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	5	Very Good
Quality of Staffing	5	Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	4	Good

What the service does well

- Foster carers were well supported to meet children's needs. The service ensured that children remained central to decision making processes.
- Foster carers told us they enjoyed positive relationships with their supervising social workers and found the manager of the service very approachable.
- Children and Young people told us they were happy living with their foster families.
- We thought this was an organisation which listened to people and respected their views.

What the service could do better

- We thought that the service could continue to develop participation particularly for children and young people.
- We found that some of quality assurance processes had been delayed due to a high number of staff and management changes within the service. We made a recommendation under the quality of management and leadership in relation to this.

What the service has done since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the service has had a significant change in staffing and management. However, we saw that good relationships with foster carers and children had been sustained.

Conclusion

We thought as a service Carolina House Trust Fostering offered children the opportunity to experience family life within a positive and supportive environment.

1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Prior to 1 April 2011, this function was carried out by the Care Commission. Information in relation to all care services is available on our website at www.scswis.com.

The service was previously registered with the Care Commission and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate on 1 April 2011.

Carolina House Trust Fostering Service is provided by Carolina House Trust, a charitable organisation which provides a range of services to children and young people. The manager reports to the Chief Executive of the organisation and the service is overseen by a board of trustees. The service works in partnership with other agencies responsible for delivering services to looked-after children.

During the last year there have been a number of staff and management changes within the organisation. The Chief Executive and the Depute Chief Executive both left the organisation and the Director of Operations (also the manager of the fostering service) is currently covering this post. There has been a vacancy in the team manager post within the fostering service for several months. In terms of outcomes we noted that there has been less support available for staff and some management processes aimed at assuring quality have been delayed.

At the time of the inspection, Carolina House Trust reported that they had seven approved foster carers offering temporary care, 13 approved foster carers offering permanent care, and four carers who had been specifically approved for respite care. Four foster carers had been approved in the previous year. Twenty six children were currently using the service.

The vision for the service as stated in their strategic plan states:

- "Carolina House Trust strives to be a professional, progressive, modern and flexible organisation which aims at all times through our key direct services, to meet the needs of young people and referring local authorities."

The values of the service reflect those of the National Care Standards.

Recommendations

A recommendation is a statement that sets out actions that a care service provider should take to improve or develop the quality of the service, but where failure to do so would not directly result in enforcement.

Recommendations are based on the National Care Standards, SSSC codes of practice and recognised good practice. These must also be outcomes-based and if the provider meets the recommendation this would improve outcomes for people receiving the service.

Requirements

A requirement is a statement which sets out what a care service must do to improve outcomes for people who use services and must be linked to a breach in the Act, its regulations, or orders made under the Act, or a condition of registration. Requirements are enforceable in law.

We make requirements where (a) there is evidence of poor outcomes for people using the service or (b) there is the potential for poor outcomes which would affect people's health, safety or welfare.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Staffing - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 4 - Good

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website www.careinspectorate.com or by calling us on 0345 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a low intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections when we are satisfied that services are working hard to provide consistently high standards of care.

What we did during the inspection

We wrote this report after a short notice announced inspection which took place between Tuesday 14 April 2015 and Thursday 23 April 2015. We told the service a few days before our visit to ensure the availability of the manager. The inspection was undertaken by one inspector.

As requested by us, the Fostering service sent us an annual return. They also completed a self-assessment of their service prior to the inspection starting.

In this inspection we gathered evidence from various sources, including the relevant sections of policies, procedures, records and other documents including:

- evidence from the services most recent self evaluation
- evaluations of the service collected by the service.
- surveys completed by panel members for the Care Inspectorate
- staffing policies
- staff recruitment information
- staff training information
- carer training records
- minutes of support group meetings
- service newsletters
- foster carer's files
- children's files.

We had discussion with:

- the manager
- staff including social workers and a placement support worker
- foster carers
- children using the service
- one child's social worker.

Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

Fire safety issues

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at www.firelawscotland.org

What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at our last inspection

Six recommendations were made at the time of the last inspection. We considered that the service had taken appropriate action in respect of five of these.

We noted that there continued to be a need to develop panel training and supervision.

(See recommendation made under Quality Theme 4, Quality Statement 4).

The service gave us an appropriate action plan which detailed the action they intended to take to address the recommendations made.

The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

Annual Return Received: Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

The Care Inspectorate received a fully completed self assessment document from the provider. We were satisfied with the way the provider completed this and with the relevant information included for each heading that we grade services under.

The provider identified what it thought the service did well, some areas for development and any changes it planned. The provider told us how the people who used the care service had taken part in the self assessment process.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We spoke with three young people who used the fostering service and four foster carers. A further three foster carers replied to an email communication we asked the service to send out. We noted that all the young people told us they enjoyed positive relationships with their foster carers. Young people and foster carers had a positive view of Carolina House Trust generally. Some comments from foster carers are contained within the main body of the report.

Taking carers' views into account

We did not speak with birth families as part of this inspection.

3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Service strengths

We looked at this statement at the time of the last inspection and assessed that the service provided very good opportunities for people who used the service to influence their care and support. This statement was examined during this inspection as the participation of foster carers and the children and young people in their care is very important to achieving good outcomes for them. In 2015-16 all services are being inspected against this statement. During this inspection we confirmed that foster carers and young people continued to have very good opportunities to assess and improve the quality of support within the service.

We saw that the service continued to engage with foster carers and young people and considered participation as a priority. Foster carers confirmed that there were a range of opportunities for them to talk about their individual care and support, and to influence how the service developed. Support groups, newsletters, emails, foster carer reviews, and individual relationships with social workers, were put forward as some of the ways in which foster carers could keep up to date with what was happening in the service - and to express their views about a range of issues. Foster carers felt well informed about what was happening within the service and told us that their views were listened to.

One foster carer told us:

- "The Trust's Horizons newsletter is good and allows carers to send in reviews. I have sent in reviews of books I have read in relation to fostering."

We saw examples where foster carers were able to follow through on their ideas and make presentations to the Board of Trustees for funding. For example, the service had recently purchased memory boxes for children and young people following a suggestion from a foster carer. We were told that the organisation planned to host an event where staff, trustees and service users could meet to discuss the future direction of the organisation. This will take place once a new Chief Executive is in post.

Children and young people told us they saw their social workers regularly and could talk to them about any worries. We saw that activity days had been arranged for children through the placement support workers and children could actively influence planning what activities were on offer. We also noted that children had continued to be involved in making the office environment more welcoming, and in the ongoing redesign of the Carolina House Trust website.

The service had also taken action in respect of the two recommendations made. Most of the young people we met confirmed that they had received a copy of the young person's handbook, and that they had seen some information about their foster carers before moving to live with them.

We made a recommendation at the time of the last inspection that the service should consider how children could influence how the service developed more widely. The manager told us of plans to involve children in reviewing the mission statement for Carolina House Trust. Although at an early stage of planning, we assessed that this would support involvement at a wider level. Plans were also in place to employ a participation worker, someone with direct experience of being looked after, to engage directly with young people to support them to express their views.

Areas for improvement

We noted that at the time of the inspection, there had been a number of staff and management changes. As a result, some of the planned events had not yet taken place.

In conclusion we assessed that in relation to care and support issues, foster carers and young people had opportunities to raise issues individually and collectively in groups and the service was likely to take action in respect of these. This has informed the grade of very good for this statement.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 2

We enable service users to make individual choices and ensure that every service user can be supported to achieve their potential.

Service strengths

This statement was examined as we are looking at the educational outcomes for children and young people in this inspecting year

Young people we spoke to during the inspection process appeared to enjoy very good relationships with their foster carers. We saw that carers were attuned to safety issues and that children were included and nurtured in their placements. A recommendation had been made at the time of the last inspection in relation to risk assessments and safer caring plans.

During this inspection we saw that health and safety risk assessments (PRAMS) for individual children were in the main completed prior to or just after placement. We saw clear evidence of risk assessments being regularly reviewed to take into account any changing circumstances. Individual Placement Agreements were detailed and provided clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the foster carer, the supervising social worker and the child's social worker.

Where placements were planned, children and young people had had opportunities to visit prior to moving to live with the foster carer. This had supported children to feel less anxious about the move. All the children we spoke with as part of the inspection told us they had had some information about their foster carers before moving.

Most foster carers told us that they generally received good quality information about the children they were being asked to look after. This supported them to meet the needs of these children. All children had regular Looked After Child Reviews where the local authority reviewed the effectiveness of the child's plan and the need for any changes.

Foster carers were committed to improving outcomes for the children in their care. All the children and young people using the fostering service were in education or an alternative provision. Foster carers and placement support workers worked effectively with children and young people to support school attendance and positive behaviour in school.

Where needed, individual work was carried out with children and young people on a range of issues including diversity. Good relationships had been built with education professionals to support positive learning. The service had begun to map outcomes for children and young people using the service including educational outcomes.

One foster carer told us:

- "Both my supporting social worker and the child's social worker attend the school review to discuss the progress and needs of the young person."

An employment support worker was available for advice and direct support to young people seeking employment.

Foster carers told us that support outwith normal office hours was accessible and of a good quality.

One foster carer told us:

- "You can always contact a social worker and they always do everything they can to make sure you have the support you need."

Children attended a range of activities and clubs and felt their foster carers supported them to do so.

Annual carer reviews considered each child in placement and how the child's continuing needs could best be met by the foster carer. For example, whether there was a need for further foster carer training. Foster carers told us about some of the training they had attended over the past year and reflected on how this had informed their practice.

One foster carer told us:

- "They have provided us with books and they have sourced information on the internet for us when we needed more knowledge."

A range of training opportunities was available for foster carers and these together with the good quality of relationship they enjoyed with their supervising social worker meant that they felt well supported in the fostering task. Unannounced visits were routinely taking place.

The service told us that all approved foster carers were subscribed to Fostering Network which is a national organisation for foster care who:

- "lobby, campaign and influence policy in order to develop, improve and champion fostering".

(<http://www.fostering.net/contact-us>).

Areas for improvement

We had some discussion with the service about how they could better record foster carer learning and development. We noted that the planned consultation event in relation to producing a training plan had not taken place.

In conclusion, we noted that there were major strengths in the quality of care and support within the service and generally we saw that children using the service were supported to achieve positive outcomes. The areas identified for improvement do not call into questions these positive grades. Rather improvements in these areas will build on the existing very good practice in the service. This has informed the grade of very good for this statement.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 2

We are confident that our staff have been recruited, and inducted, in a safe and robust manner to protect service users and staff.

Service strengths

We decided to look at this statement due to the number of staff changes which had taken place in the service over the last year.

Carolina House Trust employed an HR officer to oversee recruitment activity within the organisation. A contractual arrangement was also in place with a specialist employment service to advise on more complex employment issues.

We considered four staff files within the fostering service. This constituted around 80% of files.

We noted that Carolina House Trust had developed appropriate policies and procedures for recruiting staff. As a result recruitment practice met legal and statutory requirements. Systems supported employers to be confident about the identity, skills, knowledge, experience and registration status of potential employees.

Files were in very good order and all information was stored securely. This ensured appropriate confidentiality for staff.

The aims and values of the trust were well communicated to staff through effective induction programmes.

Areas for improvement

In conclusion, we considered that all elements of this statement were met. This has informed the grade of very good for this statement.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We ensure that everyone working in the service has an ethos of respect towards service users and each other.

Service strengths

We decided to consider this statement following ongoing discussion with the service throughout the year and a number of staff changes throughout the organisation.

We noted that a number of changes had occurred in the management of the organisation and that an Acting Chief Executive was in post at the time of the inspection. An all staff event had taken place earlier in the year to support staff to explore their own value base and to consider as an organisation how staff treated their colleagues. Following on from this, whole team meetings were held regularly to build relationships between staff and services and to support staff to share ideas across the organisation.

Staff told us that they felt respected within Carolina House Trust. Being listened to and having their opinions valued helped support an ethos of respect across the organisation. The accessibility of the director and more contact with the Board of Trustees brought a greater sense of engagement to the organisation for staff.

Foster carers told us that they were treated respectfully by staff within the service. Good communication and involvement in decision making helped them to feel part of the professional team supporting the child and in turn helped them to feel respected and valued.

Foster carers told us:

- "I absolutely love working with Carolina House Trust. It does not have a lot of carers, which make it feel more friendly, welcoming, that you are heard, that you matter, and that our suggestions are taken seriously."
- "We find that we have always been listened to and our opinions count."

We observed foster carers being respectful of the confidentiality of the children and young people in their care. They listened to the views of young people and advocated for them appropriately.

Areas for improvement

In conclusion, we considered that all elements of this statement were met. This has informed the grade of very good for this statement.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

Service strengths

We looked at this statement at the time of the last inspection and assessed that the service provided good opportunities for people who used the service to influence management processes within the service. We decided to look at this statement again as we thought the service could do more to improve participatory opportunities for children and young people using the service. Information recorded under Quality Theme 1, Quality Statement 1 has also been taken into account here.

All the foster carers we spoke with told us about opportunities they had to influence the service more widely. Being involved in initial training for potential new foster carers, recruitment of staff and managers and foster carer representation on the fostering panel ensured that a strong carer perspective was evident throughout the organisation.

Managers were accessible to foster carers and we noted a significant and welcome change in culture within the organisation with the Board of Trustees becoming more accessible to people who used the service. For example, at a recent AGM (Annual General Meeting) of the Board of Trustees, a foster carer made a presentation to the board about the role of the foster carer which was well received.

The service identified that they still had work to do in relation to involving children more in influencing the service more widely. They told us of their plans to involve children and young people in reviewing the mission statement and the recruitment of a participation worker to engage directly with young people to expand opportunities for wider participation.

Areas for improvement

In conclusion, we noted that, whilst opportunities for foster carers to influence the service more widely were clearly evident and of a very good quality, work was still needed to improve opportunities for children and young people to influence wider service development.

We were satisfied that the service had plans to address this although this remained at an early stage. We assessed that the service should continue to push forward their plans to ensure continued good practice in this area. This has informed the grade of good for this statement.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

Service strengths

We looked at this statement at the time of the last inspection and noted that the service had good systems in place to assure quality within the service. We decided to look at this statement again to follow up on recommendations we made during the last inspection and due to a number of changes in the management team of the organisation.

The organisation had adopted PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations) which provided for a structured approach to quality assurance. This helped the organisation to systematically evaluate their practice in relation to 12 key areas, including planning, resources, training and user focus. We noted the service had devised outcomes specifically for the fostering service and was working towards achieving these.

We could see a number of methods which informed quality assurance within the setting. This included the collation of statistical information, and the maintenance of databases providing management information about key processes such as unannounced visits and PVG checks were carried out.

Quality Assurances processes involved a range of key people including foster carers, young people, staff and stakeholders.

We did not observe a fostering panel during this inspection. We noted that the organisation had appointed a new independent Chair to the panel who was employed by BAAF (British Association of Adoption and Fostering). New Agency Decision Maker arrangements were also in place and a Board Member now undertook this role. We assessed that these new arrangements supported an effective panel structure and decision making processes.

Panel members confirmed that time had been set aside for panel discussion and this supported individual members to keep up to date with current research and good practice.

Areas for improvement

We noted that there had been an impact on Quality Assurance processes due to the number of changes of staff and managers and the absence of a team manager for several months.

These included:

- An annual report had not been completed or shared with foster carers, children and young people.
- File audits had not been carried out for some time. Given that we had noted some minor discrepancies in files which would have been picked up by effective auditing procedures, we assessed that this had impacted on quality overall.
- Policies and procedures were overdue for review.
- Work still needed to be undertaken in respect of panel training and supervision.
- Training plans for staff and foster carers were out of date.

In conclusion whilst we saw many strengths in the service, we assessed that the service should take action to address the areas identified in order to provide more assurance in relation to the quality of the service. This has informed the grade of good for this statement.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 1

Recommendations

1. The service should ensure that systems to assure quality within the service are put into place and information about the service's performance is shared with foster carers, children and young people.

National Care Standards, foster care and family placement services, standard 13: Management and Staffing.

4 Other information

Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the last inspection.

Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the last inspection.

Additional Information

Not applicable.

Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in the Care Inspectorate re-grading a Quality Statement within the Quality of Management and Leadership Theme (or for childminders, Quality of Staffing Theme) as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme being re-graded as unsatisfactory (1).

5 Summary of grades

Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 2	5 - Very Good
Quality of Staffing - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 2	5 - Very Good
Statement 4	5 - Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership - 4 - Good	
Statement 1	4 - Good
Statement 4	4 - Good

6 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
14 Apr 2014	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Staffing 4 - Good Management and Leadership 4 - Good
18 Apr 2013	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 5 - Very Good Management and Leadership 4 - Good
27 Jul 2012	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 4 - Good Management and Leadership 4 - Good
22 Oct 2010	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing Not Assessed Management and Leadership Not Assessed
24 Nov 2009	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very Good Staffing 4 - Good

Inspection report continued

		Management and Leadership	Not Assessed
12 Jan 2009	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	4 - Good

All inspections and grades before 1 April 2011 are those reported by the former regulator of care services, the Care Commission.

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