

National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Limited Fostering Service

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Service provided by:
The National Fostering Agency
(Scotland) Limited

Service provider number:
SP2005007502

Care service number:
CS2005098696

About the service

National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Ltd is an independent company owned by the National Fostering Agency Group. The service has been registered with the Care Inspectorate since the Care Inspectorate was formed in 2011. It was previously registered with the Care Commission. National Fostering Agency (Scotland) Ltd provides a family placement service for children and young people aged from 0 to 18 years who are assessed as in need of alternative family care. The agency recruits and supports carer families to provide a range of fostering placements to children including, permanent, long terms, interim and short break.

During 2016, the service recruited 11 new fostering families. However 11 fostering families stopped fostering for various reasons meaning there was no net increase or decrease in fostering capacity. Demand for the service remains high and as at 31 December 2016 a total of 132 foster carer households were looking after 186 children and young people.

The service aims to provide a high standard of training and support to foster carers to enable them to be well equipped to meet the needs of children and young people placed with them. It recognises the need for not only a placement with a substitute family, but for that placement to achieve the desired outcome of the child's plan, whether that is rehabilitation, permanence or moving to independence.

As the findings of this inspection are based on a sample of children and young people, inspectors cannot assure the quality of experience for every service user.

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What people told us

We spoke with three foster carer families individually and four children who were looked after by them. We spoke with a further group of foster carers and heard their views by attending the foster carer conference which took place during the inspection.

Foster carers told us that they were happy about the quality of support they received. Training was reported to be of a good quality although carers reported that there needed to be more availability in local areas. Foster carers noted that the Carers Academy training increased their confidence in meeting children's needs.

"The NFA training we receive is very high quality. I have completed the Carer Academy which gives a deeper understanding of the courses offered and stronger confidence to deal with children's issues."

Information about children's needs was usually available in advance of children being placed, supporting the foster carer to make decisions about their capacity to meet those needs. Foster carers felt well informed about the child's plan and were supported by the agency to raise any issues.

Foster carers felt the service listened to them through their Supervising Social Worker, the recently re established support groups, Annual Reviews and the Carer's Forum.

"Any issues or queries I have raised at supervision are always actioned by my SSW (Supervising Social Worker and she will get back to me very quickly"

Generally foster carers saw the service as forward looking with a clear aim of improvement.

"The service is good and always seems to be looking at ways to improve."

We spoke with four looked after children who told us how the fostering family helped them to stay healthy, do well at school and keep in touch with their families.

Some young people told us:

"It's really good here"

"We are healthy - we eat fruit, we walk a daily mile at school and we go to bed and get good sleep."

Self assessment

The service had not been asked to complete a self assessment in advance of the inspection. We looked at the annual report and spoke with the management team about the agency. This demonstrated their priorities for development and how they were monitoring the quality of the provision within the agency.

From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	5 - Very Good
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	5 - Very Good

What the service does well

The agency adopted a systematic approach to identifying appropriate fostering families for children, taking into account the child/young person's needs and the foster carer's skills and experience. Good quality 'matching' supports an early identification of any needs for further support for fostering situations.

Children told us they felt happy and safe within their fostering families. We saw evidence that foster carers helped children to stay healthy and do well in education. We saw that children were encouraged to take part in their local communities, attending school and taking part in activities. Children told us they felt they were a part of the foster carer's immediate and extended family. We saw that some foster carers demonstrated a strong 'stickability' with children and young people which supported these feelings of belonging.

Children could have a say and could influence their day to day choices and foster carers advocated appropriately to help children achieve positive outcomes identified through the child's plan. The agency development plan identified the need for further engagement with children to influence all areas of service development.

Foster carers felt supported by the agency individually through the good relationships they experienced with their social worker and more widely through support groups. Supervision provided foster carers with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and develop their skills. Information was provided to help foster carers meet children's needs and fostering situations were regularly reviewed to make sure they were still appropriate. Foster carer training was reported to be of a very good quality and supported foster carers to meet the diverse needs of the children they were looking after.

We saw that the agency respected their foster carers and were willing to engage with them to improve all aspects of provision.

The service made good use of management systems to monitor the quality of work within the service, for example in terms of foster carer training, statutory checks and foster carer reviews. In addition, a fostering panel with a strong independent focus and a well defined agency decision maker role, monitored the work of the service and provided appropriate challenge. Staff felt well supported and were able to contribute to the overall improvement of the service. Planning within the agency was SMART, dynamic and involved a range of key groups.

What the service could do better

Risk assessment generally was well developed within the agency. However risk management planning was not always clearly recorded or identified. The service lacked clarity about restraint and the need to notify the care inspectorate of any incidents of restraint. Being clear about instances of restraint or "holding" children allows for more transparent planning for the day to day safe care of the child/young person and any need for further training or support for the foster carer.

Being a national agency brought some challenges to the provision of training. The agency were beginning to develop a more flexible approach to learning and development which would support the reflective practice approach within the wider agency.

The fostering panel would benefit from a user focus. The agency noted they continue to try to recruit a foster carer and a care experienced young person to sit on the fostering panel.

Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
27 Nov 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 5 - Very good
9 Jun 2015	Re-grade	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 4 - Good
8 Oct 2014	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 3 - Adequate Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 3 - Adequate
3 Dec 2013	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good
18 Oct 2011	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership Not assessed
17 Dec 2010	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership 5 - Very good
22 Feb 2010	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership Not assessed
2 Mar 2009	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good

Date	Type	Gradings	
		Management and leadership	4 - Good

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