



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

# Inspection Report on

**Family Fostering Partners**

**20 Blue Street  
Carmarthen  
SA31 3LE**

**Mae'r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg**

**This report is also available in Welsh**

**Date of Publication**

**Thursday, 17 May 2018**

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## **Description of the service**

Family Fostering Partners was registered as an independent fostering agency in June 2015, with its main office based in Carmarthen. The agency is a limited company, owned and managed by a board of directors, including the responsible individual (RI). The registered manager is Bernadette Millis.

Family Fostering Partners is a small agency, with seventeen foster carer households at the start of the inspection, and two further foster carers recommended for approval during the inspection period. The agency undertakes the recruitment and assessment of foster carers and provides fostering placements for children for children 0-18 years and parent and child placements. The agency operates its service through the medium of English and Welsh.

## **Summary of our findings**

### **1. Overall assessment**

We found that children and young people receive child centred care based on their individual needs and preferences. Stable placements are provided for children and young people, some with challenging and complex needs. Foster carers receive good support from a staff team who are well trained, caring, skilled and knowledgeable. Foster carers feel well supported by the supervising social workers, who in turn feel fully supported by their manager and the responsible individual. There are quality assurance systems in place and very good consultation processes with children and young people, foster carers and professionals, ensuring the continuing improvement of the service. The service provides an active offer of the Welsh language and is able to provide many of its services through the medium of the Welsh language.

### **2. Improvements**

- The registered manager has completed a QCF diploma level 5 in management and leadership
- The agency has set up a bil-igual website for foster carers and young people
- The agency has employed an additional supervising social worker and business development manager

### **3. Requirements and recommendations**

There were no issues of non compliance to report

Section 4 of this report sets out recommendations to improve the service.

Recommendations were made in respect of the quality of care report.

## 1. Well-being

### Summary

We found that children and young people's well-being is promoted as they are cared for by foster carers that understand their needs and are warm, nurturing and caring in their approach. Young people are encouraged to make choices and express their views in their day to day lives and involved in their care planning.

### Our findings

Children and young people are listened to and fully involved in making decisions about the care they receive and the way they spend their time. Children have a voice and are encouraged to express their views, in relation to their day to day lives and within the care planning process. Children and young people were encouraged by their foster carers and supervising social workers (SSW's) to complete consultation documents as part of the looked after children (LAC) reviews and attend their reviews. Foster carers and staff told us that children and young people were able to access an advocate to help them through this process. Supervision recordings evidenced that children were able to make choices on a day to day basis and we saw that they were regularly encouraged by their SSW's during visits to express their views, particularly regarding any worries they might have. We saw in consultation documents completed by young people that they were involved in decisions made in their foster home e.g *'Yes I do have a say in what goes on. We decide on food and rules.'* We saw in records that one young person was asked to use his IT knowledge to put together a presentation as part of chairing his next LAC review. We saw that children and young people contributed to behaviour management plans and were able to contribute to their safe care plans. The agency held a formal training and consultation session with young people in October 2017 on internet safety and as part of the consultation element they developed a proforma sheet for young people to complete as part of their safe care plans. We were told by the agency that they were developing further consultation and participation opportunities for carers and children through a new interactive website which was due to be launched on the 11 April 2018. The agency had employed a business development manager who had developed a bi-lingual resource using the agency logo elephants and 'Buttons and Blue' which included e-books and an animated cartoon aimed at helping fostered children to understand their past and current experiences. We were told that the website would enable carers to access e books, education and therapeutic materials. Children and young people including foster carers own birth children would be able to give instant feedback on the agency, to make suggestions and to raise any worries or concerns they had about any aspect of their lives via their 'Agony Elephants,' 'Buttons and Blue'. We were told that any correspondence with 'Buttons' via the secure page would activate an instant email to a designated person who was suitably qualified and experienced to reply to them. Children and young people are supported and encouraged to express their views and opinions and are able to voice their concerns.

Children and young people are given support regarding their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Through discussion with foster carers, staff and viewing of records we saw that the children's physical health needs were well-met, with children appropriately registered with GP's, dentists and opticians, and supported by their foster carers to attend appointments as needed. We saw many comments from social workers in feedback to the agency and comments in LAC reviews,

of how foster carers had met the physical and emotional needs of the children and young people in placement. One example from a social worker was *'X requires intensive 1-1 reparative style parenting to assist their attachment formation and emotional and global development. They have a significant speech and language delay and their emotional development is far younger than their chronological age. This requires X's emotional, developmental and attachment formation needs to be met with a more therapeutic style of caregiving. Therefore it is very positive that the carers have regular training in caring for traumatised children with attachment difficulties'*. We also saw that the agency had commissioned the services of a qualified and experienced clinical psychologist to provide additional therapeutic support to children and guidance to foster carers dealing with complex needs. We were told by staff and foster carers that several foster carers had accessed this service. Foster carers we spoke with said that they were supported through training to develop practical skills in behaviour management and had attended a 12 week course, 'fostering changes', which they said had greatly helped them in developing practical skills in behaviour management. We were told by staff that 50% of their carers had attended this course. Children and young people receive appropriate care because they are cared for by foster carers who have a good understanding of their health and safety needs and are able to provide appropriate support and care.

Children and young people are protected from abuse. Staff and foster carers we spoke with were familiar with the agency safeguarding policy and evidenced that they knew what to do if they had any concerns. We were told by staff and foster carers and we saw in foster carers records that foster carers had attended safeguarding training which was updated as required. We saw when an issue involving safeguarding was brought to the attention of the agency it was dealt with in an appropriate manner. Children and young people are protected because the service, foster carers and staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures.

## 2. Care and Support

### Summary

Children and young people receive the right care at the right time in the way they want. They are supported by skilled foster carers who provide stability in their lives and positively impact on their experience, progress and outcomes. We saw evidence of stable and long term placements supported by carefully managed respite to support the placement.

### Our findings

Children and young people are supported by skilled foster carers who provide stability in children's lives. We saw evidence in files we looked at and in discussion with foster carers' of their commitment to the children and young people they cared for to achieve stability and to feel part of their family life. The agency had an outcome focused approach to record children's and young people progress within their placement. Young people were encouraged and supported to complete progress reports by the SSW's when they visited the carers. Foster carers spoke to us about the children and young people they cared for with great fondness and caring and presented as motivated in wanting to achieve positive outcomes for the young people they cared for. We saw several comments from social workers as part of foster carers annual reviews and LAC reviews which were complimentary about the care provided and the impact on young people's lives. One social worker commented '*X reports feeling safe where he is living now, and has someone to talk to if things become too difficult*' and another said '*X and Y both present as very warm, nurturing and committed carers who show a lot of resilience with a very challenging and complex placement*'. The agency had also produced an information pack for parents in parent and child placements on the care needs of babies, which was comprehensive and informative and was in a format which also included pictorial information. This had been particularly useful for two placements where the parents' first language was not English. Children and young people receive the right care at the right time with foster carers who strive to achieve positive outcomes for the young people in their care.

Foster carers take 'respite' breaks when it is in the child or young person's best interest and to improve stability of the placements and the alternative placements takes full account of the child or young person's needs. Many of the placements with Family Fostering Partners were solo placements because of the complex and challenging needs of the young people being fostered. A planned package of paid respite taken as day care or overnight care was offered to the carers to support the placements, which had resulted in stable and long term placements. We met with a group of carers and children at a bowling event. It was immediately obvious that all the carers and children knew each other very well. We saw that the children and young people had close attachments to their foster carers and knew their respite carers and the other children very well. One foster carer said '*Because of the support that we get from the agency in meeting with each other and with the children we know them well when they come for respite*'. They also told us that they present the respite as 'sleep overs' with their friends. One young person told us '*I enjoy going to X for the night as I get time to do things with Y*'. We saw that specific respite carers were identified for children and young people and one set of carers presented for approval to the foster panel we observed, had been identified to provide respite for a particular child. Respite carers we spoke with said that they were provided with all the up to date information they needed to provide appropriate care. One respite carer commented in a consultation for their annual review '*As respite carers we*

*are given all the information on the child/young person by the agency. We also work closely with the children's carers. This enables the transition to be easier for the children'. Children and young people are provided with care and support which ensures stability in their placements.*

Children and young people are encouraged to be creative, to follow their interests, exploring new challenges and experiencing a sense of achievement. Foster carers and staff we spoke with said that the agency organised activities for children and young people during the school holidays and that they encouraged young people to try new activities. One social worker commented in a LAC review '*X is developing self-confidence and participating in activities that they have never tried before. Y foster carer has been entirely responsible for assisting with these opportunities*'. We saw in records we looked at that children and young people had been involved in several activities as part of the children's group e.g rock climbing, abseiling, visits to the cinema, bowling and had participated in trips held for foster carers and children e.g Folly Farm. We also saw evidence of children and young people participating in activities as part of their foster family e.g going to the beach with the dogs, making dens and playing on a scooter. We saw that one young person had joined the Cadets and attended camp and was learning to play golf. Children told us that they had lots of opportunities to try new things. One child told us about going 'crabbing' with their respite carer. Children and young people can be involved, participate and feel valued.

### 3. Leadership and Management

#### Summary

The needs of the children and young people placed with Family Fostering Partners are met because the service is effectively and efficiently managed and staff are experienced, well trained and knowledgeable. Foster carers are well supported through regular supervision and effective training. The agency proactively monitors the quality of the service and young people and their foster carers are able to contribute to the continuous improvement of the service. The agency is able to offer a fully bi-lingual service through the medium of Welsh and English.

#### Our findings

Children and young people, foster carers and professionals involved with the service are clear about what the service sets out to deliver. There was a clear statement of purpose which outlined the aims and objective of the service and described the service being provided, which included the service's position regarding the 'active offer' of the Welsh language. We saw that an informative children's guide and a young person's guide had been produced by the service, which provided information about the fostering service. Foster carers we spoke with said that the children and young people placed with them had received a copy of the guides, subject to their age and understanding. Children and young people receive a service as described in the statement of purpose and therefore promotes their well-being.

Children and young people benefit from a service where the foster carers receive appropriate supervision, good support and training. We saw in records we viewed and in discussion with SSWs that a high level of support which included out of hours support, supervision and monitoring is provided by agency staff to foster carers, to maintain the stability of placements. The foster carers we spoke with were highly complimentary of the support they received and said that their SSWs were knowledgeable, approachable and responsive to their needs. Foster carers with a child in placement received on average two visits monthly, one focussed on carer's supervision and the other on young people's progress in placement. Foster carers who provided respite only or, where there was no child in placement were visited monthly. Additional visits were said to take place for parent and child placements which was initially weekly and then fortnightly with increased visits if appropriate. First language Welsh speakers were offered the opportunity to receive their supervision through the medium of Welsh, as the agency had a Welsh speaking SSW. Foster carers we spoke with said that they received unannounced visits and phone calls offering support when needed which included out of hours. One foster carer said *'I had good support from the on call SSW; she was very understanding and kept in touch until the matter was resolved'*. Records we examined and discussion with carers and staff evidenced that foster carers received training before they were approved in 'skills to foster' training and foster carers approved for parent and child placements received additional training. Existing foster carers were involved in the recruitment and training of newly approved foster carers. We saw that foster carers had received post approval training e.g. in safeguarding, child sexual exploitation, safe handling and de-escalation, safe care, drug and alcohol awareness, children and common mental health disorders, recording. Training was undertaken in three venues to assist foster carers' attendance. Foster carers were able access a comprehensive range of e-learning courses, in addition to the service's face to face training programme. Carers support groups were held bi-monthly and foster carers we spoke with said that they found these to

be informative and helpful in making links with other foster carers. Children and young people benefit from a service where the well-being and support of foster carers is seen as a priority.

Children and young people and their carers receive a good standard of care from a staff team who receive good support and clear direction from the registered manager and the responsible individual. Two SSWs were employed by the agency. The SSWs we spoke with and staff files we saw indicated that the staff received regular supervision and an annual appraisal. We saw that supervision was structured, quality assurance focussed with a set agenda. Supervision gave an opportunity for discussion on foster carers they were responsible for and the children in placement, as well as used for discussion on training and support. The SSW's were qualified, experienced, and knowledgeable and spoke with passion and commitment of the work they undertook with foster carers and children and young people. They said that they felt very well supported by their manager and the responsible individual. Because of the service being small the registered manager and responsible individual as well as the office manager and the business development manager were well known to children and foster carers. The responsible individual, registered manager and SSW's were all qualified social workers who were registered with Social Care Wales. Between them, they had substantial experience, not only of fostering services, but of the broader social work field, including safeguarding. The registered manager had completed a QCF diploma level 5 in Management and Leadership which had been a requirement at the last inspection. Children and young people benefit from a service where the staff team are supported to provide a high quality service.

There are robust, ongoing monitoring systems in place to assess the quality of the service in relation to the outcomes for children and young people. This includes feedback from children and young people using the service, their foster carers and social workers. The service used both formal and informal consultation to gain the experiences of children and young people. We saw evidence of young people and their carers being asked their views on the placements for the annual reviews of the foster carer's. We saw in the annual review of quality of care report March 31<sup>st</sup> 2017- 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018 that children, foster carers and social workers views and opinions were collated and used to develop an action plan for improvement. We saw many examples of how the agency had responded to consultation with foster carers e.g. As a result of consultation with first language Welsh speaking carers the agency had offered foster carers the choice of having their annual review conducted through the medium of Welsh. The foster panel chair was also Welsh speaking. The review of quality of care undertaken was very comprehensive and in a format suitable as an internal document. However, the report included information which could identify persons involved with the agency, even though initials were used. We therefore advised the registered manager and the responsible individual that this report would not be appropriate to share with young people, foster carers, parents or any other relevant people who requested it. The manager and the responsible individual agreed and said they would produce a more appropriate report for this purpose. Children and young people benefit from a service which proactively monitors the quality of the service they provide and children and young people and their foster carers are able to contribute to the development of continuous improvement of the service.

The fostering panel promotes safe, secure placements through rigorous quality assurance. We saw that the agency had established the fostering panel, in accordance with regulations and had appointed an independent chair who had extensive knowledge and experience of chairing panels. We were told by the manager that the chair and the newly appointed vice chair were due to attend specific training on chairing fostering panel. We observed a fostering panel meeting, viewed

previous panel minutes and met with the panel chair. These evidenced that the panel was well conducted and robust in its questioning of the Form F assessor and applicants attending panel for approval. The chair had ensured that every member of panel contributed to the discussion in respect of the form F application being made and a clear rationale given for recommendations made. Form F assessments were quality assured before going to panel and the Form F assessments we viewed were of a good standard. Prospective foster carers who attended panel were asked to give feedback on the process and two we viewed were positive on the experience of attending panel. One said 'thank you for all support provided.' Panel members had been given copies of the policies and procedures for foster panel and received training e.g safeguarding, attachment, parenting skills. We heard panel members discussing a training day they had undertaken involving a 'mock' panel and panel members and the chair said this training had been very helpful in their understanding of their responsibilities, as part of fostering panel. We were told that panel members felt valued by the agency, were treated respectfully and felt that the agency was always trying to progress. We were also told that feedback from foster carers e.g during annual reviews, was very positive and that the reason that the agency had good stable placements was down to the careful matching which the agency did before placing children and young people. Children and young people are provided with safe secure placements because foster panel ensures that rigorous and robust checks have been undertaken on foster carers approved by the agency.

#### **4. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection**

##### **4.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections**

The service was non compliant with Regulation 7(2)(b)(i) of the Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003, as the registered manager did not hold a recognised management qualification. Registration with CIW was granted subject to the condition that she obtain a management qualification as recognised by the Care Council for Wales by 22 June 2016. Compliance with this condition should be achieved by the specified date and CSSIW notified when the qualification is obtained. At this inspection, compliance was seen to have been achieved.

##### **4.2 Recommendations for improvement**

The responsible individuals should ensure that a review of the quality of care report is available to share with young people, foster carers, parents or any other relevant people who requested it.

## **5. How we undertook this inspection**

This was a full inspection undertaken as part of the annual inspection programme, which looked at the well-being of children and young people, the care and support they receive and leadership and management. The announced inspection was undertaken by one inspector on 20 February 2018 between 9.45 and 17.45, 22 February 2018 between 9.40 and 13.00 and 23 February between 10.10 and 13.25

The following methods were used:

- We spoke to foster carers and young people at a bowling event organised by FFP
- We spoke to the registered manager, responsible individual, two SSW's and business development manager.
- We looked at a range of records which included four young people's personal files, four foster carers files, two staff supervision files, review of quality of care report, training records, three panel meeting minutes
- Examination of the service's statement of purpose, and children and young person's guides
- We observed a fostering panel and met with the panel chair
- We considered information held by CIW

Further information about what we do can be found on our website [www.cssiw.org.uk](http://www.cssiw.org.uk)

## About the service

Type of care provided	Independent Fostering Agency
Registered Person	Family Fostering Partners Ltd
Registered Manager(s)	Bernadette Millis
Date of previous CSSIW inspection	19/01/2016, 20/01/2016, 21/01/2016
Dates of this Inspection visit(s)	20/02/2018
Operating Language of the service	Both
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	yes
<b>Additional Information:</b>  The service operates bi-lingually and is able to operate the majority of its service through the medium of Welsh.	