



Inspection Report

Action for Children Fostering Taith Newydd

**The Stable Block
Beechwood Park
Newport
NP19 8AJ**

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Description of the service

Action for Children Fostering Taith Newydd is registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as an Independent Fostering Agency. The registered manager is Matthew Lewis and a responsible individual (RI) has been appointed by the registered provider to oversee the management of the agency. At the time of the inspection, there were 33 fostering households approved by the agency providing placements for 32 children.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

The agency has a strong ethos of providing a nurturing and caring fostering experience for children where they can thrive and develop in stable and secure fostering families. Children are cared for by foster carers who provide them with good experiences and opportunities and are committed to supporting them achieve positive outcomes. Foster carers work in close collaboration with other professionals and make valid contributions to planning and decision-making for children and young people. The leadership and management of the service provides clear direction on the vision and development of the service and is innovative and provides for sector leading practice in therapeutic support for children with complex care needs. Staff are knowledgeable and skilled in their role and this underpins the therapeutic approach taken by the agency to support children to achieve the best possible outcomes.

2. Improvements

There has been improved communication between senior management and the staff team due to a change in the responsible individual who undertakes more frequent visits to the agency office and attends fostering panel. The agency has appointed a 'lead training and development practitioner' who has a primary role in the delivery and development of training and has also established a new service resource of an 'Art Space'. This is a dedicated area outside of the agency's offices for children to engage in art and music therapeutic workshops and for foster carers to utilise for informal support meetings. The agency is part of a new initiative developed with other charitable fostering agencies aimed at improving access to training for foster carers and potentially to improve placement choice for children.

3. Requirements and recommendations

Section five of this report sets out our recommendations for improvement.

1. Well-being

Summary

Children are able to develop positive attachments to their foster carers who understand their needs and who aim to provide a caring and nurturing environment for them to live and thrive. They are encouraged and supported to participate in a range of educational, social and leisure activities to maximise their potential and promote their overall well-being. Most children make exceptional individual progress from their starting points.

Our findings

Children are valued. They are able to feel safe, secure and develop strong, healthy attachments with their foster carers. Foster carers we spoke with were committed and passionate about the children they cared for to ensure they had a positive, inclusive family experience with the best opportunities they could provide. Children's consultation by the agency to inform their annual review of their quality of care included comments such as:

- *'I love the family that I'm in...it feels like a safe place to be...'*
- *'Made me feel like I belong to the family...'*

The agency offered a range of shared activities and opportunities for foster carers, their families and children to come together which promoted a sense of unity and shared experiences for all. This included annual events and activities such as a 'bake off' cake making competition and a forthcoming Easter egg hunt in addition to picnics, parties and day trips. The support offered to foster carers was based on a more integrated 'foster family' approach. The 'arts space' had held craft workshops to promote a therapeutic experience for children to undertake sensory arts based activities, have fun and learn new skills. Children were able to bring friends to support their confidence and we saw comments collated by the agency that they enjoyed these shared activities. Foster carers commented that the service encouraged mutual support between foster carers and their families and that the 'art space' was being used as a space for carers to come together and do what interested them or just meet for coffee and 'a chat'. From this information we conclude that children's opportunities to be provided with a caring, inclusive family experience is prioritised.

Children are able to maximise their achievements and are able to engage in activities, arts, sports and leisure interests. From our review of documentation and our discussion with foster carers and staff, we found that children had access to opportunities to support their overall development. Children participated in a range of activities and interests which ranged from football, rugby, cricket, swimming and also art clubs, guides, choir and dancing. Children had enjoyed holidays with their foster carers and activities, trips and

events organised by the agency promoted the concept of fostering as a family and promoted 'togetherness'. This indicates that children are supported to develop individual interests and have positive leisure experiences which, in turn, promotes their self esteem and contributes to their overall well-being.

2. Care and Support

Summary

Children are cared for and supported by skilled foster carers who provide stability in their lives and this positively impacts on their experience, progress and outcomes. Foster carers showed genuine commitment and dedication to supporting children to reach their full potential. This was a clear strength of the agency and members of staff had comprehensive knowledge and insight of individual children and young people and their progress. The high level of support to foster carers reflects the agency's ethos of valuing the fundamental contribution fostering families make to ensure successful outcomes for the children they care for.

Our findings

Children live and thrive in safe and stable foster placements in which they develop secure relationships with those significant in their lives. We found that outcomes for children were very good. Some children with complex care needs had remained living with their fostering families due to the high level of commitment made by their carers to offer them a safe place for them to live. We saw evidence in our review of documentation of foster carers exceeding the agency's high standard of care in order to achieve the very best outcomes for those they cared for. Comments from foster carers and children's social workers included:

- *'...our child is central to their decision making process and so are we as carers.'* (foster carer)
- *'...a team effort like this provides reassurance to us, support, advice and also gives additional insight into how to improve the relationship with the child to increase the chance of a successful future for (them).'* (foster carer)
- *'I feel this level of support will aid in preventing placement breakdown and move on.'*(social worker)

Foster carers told us that they felt the agency cared; staff knew them and their children well and that *'nothing ever seemed too much trouble'*. Children receive the right care at the right time with foster carers who strive to achieve positive outcomes for those in their care.

Children are encouraged and supported to achieve their educational potential taking into account their attainment and progress from the beginning of their placement. The agency maintained some information in relation to the educational arrangements for children which was documented on children's records. Foster carers told us there was a clear expectation for them to attend children's parent evening and attend Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. Foster carers were good advocates for the children they looked after and worked to promote and ensure children were well supported in education and training. We heard that their supervising social workers were supportive in attending meetings and influential in

making decisions which supported children's education. The manager and therapeutic practitioner also attended meetings to support and influence how schools understood and responded to some aspects of children's behaviour. We heard this had been instrumental in supporting some children to be placed in an education resource suitable for their needs. This information was reflected in our review of children's records and in our discussions with foster carers and staff. Overall, we consider that the agency works proactively with other agencies and strives to improve children education experience. However, the agency needs to further develop systems to collate information to demonstrate the effectiveness of the service in promoting children's educational progress, attendance and academic attainment.

Children's physical and emotional health needs are supported and promoted. We saw from our review of foster carer's supervision records that their supervising social workers ensured children were registered with health professionals, attended routine health check ups and appropriate liaison with other external professionals, including Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was taking place. Foster carers who cared for children with more complex emotional needs had received additional support from the agency's lead therapeutic practitioner via attachment clinics and practice consultation. The registered manager is also 'hands on' in providing support and advice to foster carers and children's social workers and had informed children's care plans. For example, we observed discussions taking place between the lead therapeutic practitioner and registered manager in relation to a child with significant and complex needs about the effectiveness of the strategies in place to safeguard their needs and to inform and support the local authority's plans for their future care. These considerations evidenced the commitment the agency had to the child and to ensure that they sustained their relationship with their foster carer which was fundamental to their emotional health and well-being. From this information, we conclude that children's physical and emotional health needs are effectively met.

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 they had attended safeguarding training which was updated as required. We saw that where safeguarding issues were raised, that the agency responded and took appropriate action to investigate concerns. We saw that foster carers received good-quality training throughout the year. Support from supervising social workers was regular and pro active in offering additional support at periods when children's needs were heightened and intensified. Discussions with supervising social workers and records of visits to foster carers and children confirmed this. We conclude from this information that children are protected because the service, foster carers and staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding procedures.

3. Leadership and Management

Summary

The leadership and management of the agency have a clear vision for the service provided and managers were innovative and forward thinking in developing, responding and forging new approaches to children's complex needs. 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 development of the service.

Our findings

The agency has a statement of purpose which provides an accurate description of the service and includes information on the overall aims of the service and the specific objectives and principles by which these were to be achieved. Foster carers told us they were provided with a new statement of purpose when any changes took place. We considered that it would be useful for the document to be dated. Information on the agency's ability to provide an 'active offer' of the Welsh language should also be included. We were advised by the registered manager that the statement of purpose was available in Welsh. This could be made clear on the document for people to be aware that this was an option. The agency had produced an information leaflet in English and Welsh outlining their therapeutic fostering approach within the service offered. There was also a children's guide and young person's guide to fostering which provided basic information about the service. We were informed that this was in the process of being updated to provide a more engaging and accessible document for children. Overall, we conclude that children and young people receive a service as outlined in the agency's statement of purpose.

The service is effectively and efficiently managed. The responsible individual, registered manager and team manager provide oversight of the service and are highly skilled, well qualified and experienced to manage the fostering service with positive effect. Changes in the national structure of the organisation to a devolved, regional service had resulted in a change to the responsible individual since our last inspection. This had led to a more visible presence of the responsible individual in the agency with them undertaking fortnightly visits to the agency office. The responsible individual told us that communication with the registered manager and team manager was good and that quality assurance processes included scrutiny of notifiable incidents, file audits and observation of fostering panel as an opportunity to quality assess applications and meet prospective foster carers. Changes within the agency had included the appointment of a lead training and development practitioner. This role was created to deliver and facilitate the 'confidence in care' training programme with local authorities and to develop new initiatives within the agency, such as the 'arts space'. This had been established following a grant from the Police Crime Commission for the agency to develop therapeutic, sensory art activities. The agency had

also started to campaign for a change in the use of language used to describe children's experiences of being fostered. This was to promote a more inclusive view with foster 'carers' referred to as foster 'parents' and the word 'placement' replaced with 'home' or 'family'. The registered manager told us that they had distributed information to local authorities and presented his views to the commissioning framework workshop. This information evidences that the service provided drives continuous improvement and the vision and purpose of the service is clear.

The staff team is supported through a clear line management structure and by the organisation at a local and national level. The team manager assured us that the recruitment and vetting of staff is robust and follows safe and timely recruitment processes. Information in relation to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) was held at the agency and the team manager confirmed that they undertook all checks and validated references. However, at the time of our visits we were unable to access staff files to ensure appropriate recruitment processes were in place. This is because the agency was in the process of centralising their staff records and these were in transit to the provider's central office and would be uploaded onto electronic records. This information will need to be considered during our next inspection of the service. Supervision of staff was undertaken by the team manager. From our review of records, we found that these were held monthly, thorough and evidenced that a range of issues were routinely included on the agenda such as case work management, professional practice development and regulatory compliance. Supervision supported reflective practice and staff's welfare and well-being was also considered and action taken to minimise risks. Appraisals were also seen to be held annually and performance ratings gave staff a clear indication of their progress. Staff we spoke with confirmed that they had good access to training which reflected the agency's therapeutic approach to underpin their approach to supervise and support foster carers. Many were also actively involved in facilitating training to foster carers. From this information, we conclude that children and their foster carers receive a good standard of care from a staff team who are efficient, knowledgeable and highly skilled in their role.

The agency recruits, assesses and trains foster carers to ensure that they are skilled to meet the range of needs for children. Prospective foster carers received clear information and training to prepare them for their fostering role. We viewed a sample of foster panel minutes and the panel annual report from the period April 2016 to March 2017. The constitution of the panel met legislative requirements and panel members had a range of experiences and knowledge of caring for children. The panel information we viewed promoted safe and secure placements through rigorous quality assurance. It had identified improvements required to ensure the information obtained was consistent and that evidence provided was detailed to ensure foster carers were able and competent in meeting the fostering task. From our review of documentation, we found that foster carer's annual reviews had not been consistently completed within timescale although records showed that these were now all up to date. We advised the registered manager and team manager that these should be completed within twelve months to meet legal requirements. Information obtained to inform the review included the supervising social worker report and

the foster carer's, local authority social worker, birth children and children looked after comments. We saw letters were provided to foster carers outlining the outcome of their review.

In addition, foster carer's support, supervision and training was highly effective in ensuring that the standards of care to children were safe and met their needs. Feedback from foster carers was that they overwhelmingly identified with the charitable/not for profit status of the agency and were motivated to provide a secure and stable home for children which was a significant factor for them in choosing to be approved with the agency. They had access to training relevant to the fostering task and had included subject matters such as safeguarding, first aid, substance misuse and managing contact. Training to reflect a therapeutic, attachment based approach was reflected in courses such as caring for the traumatised child, therapeutic play, crisis management and confidence in care. Staff provided a high level of supervision to foster carers and their practice. Supervising social workers visited placements regularly with increasing levels of support being provided depending on the level of need required. The registered manager and therapeutic practitioner offered additional support, advice and attendance at meeting to support good outcomes for children. Children were regularly seen and spoken with and staff knew the children well. Staff records of supervisory visits were comprehensive and consistently explored the experiences, progress and protection of young people, placement issues and the experiences of the foster family. The out of hours support was efficient and carers reported they were able to access support, advice or guidance promptly when this was requested. Staff responded promptly to them and they felt they always had a point of contact for them in a crisis. This demonstrates that children and young people benefit from having effective and caring people around them to enhance their life opportunities

A system had been established to monitor, review and improve the quality of care provided by the agency. The last report completed was from the period October 2015 to April 2017 which extends beyond the period as legally required. The manager advised us that this was to make the reporting period consistent with other agency processes. The report evidenced consultation with carers, children and stakeholders about the quality of care provided by the service. Whilst this provided some analysis of information, it did not provide evidence or information about the progress and outcomes of children to demonstrate whether the objectives of their care plans had been achieved. We suggested that the agency could include information, within the period reviewed, on placement outcomes for children which would provide the agency with a clearer understanding of its effectiveness in meeting its statement of purpose.

4. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

4.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

There were no areas of non compliance identified at the previous inspection.

4.2 Areas of non compliance identified at this inspection

There were no areas of non compliance identified where the agency were not meeting legal requirements.

4.3 Recommendations for improvement:

- The statement of purpose is dated and includes information of the agency's ability to provide an 'active offer' of the Welsh language for people using the service.
- Systems to monitor the educational attainments and outcomes of children using the service are continued to be developed.
- The annual review of the quality of care provided is conducted within a minimum of twelve months and that it provides more detailed data, evidence and analyses of outcomes for children including those set out in their care and support plans and foster placement agreements.
- Foster carer's annual reviews are held within the required timescales and that contingency plans are in place to ensure that this is effectively implemented.
- The agency submits an application to CIW to re register as Fostering Wales which is the operational name of the service.

5. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full scheduled announced inspection undertaken in accordance with the CIW inspection framework

The following sources of information were used to inform this report:

- Pre arranged Inspection visits to the agency on 27, 28 and 29 March 2018.
- Information held by CIW. This included the previous inspection report and notifications.
- Discussions with the responsible individual and registered manager.
- Consultation with the team manager, lead therapeutic practitioner and training and development practitioner.
- Discussion with 4 supervising social workers.
- Consultation with a group of 8 foster carers.
- Observation of Placement Meeting.
- Questionnaires were sent out to 12 foster carers, 2 were returned.
- Questionnaires were sent to 10 members of staff, 4 were returned.
- Consideration of agency records including the statement of purpose, quality of care review, records relating to foster carers and children.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website www.ciw.org.uk

About the service

Type of care provided	Independent Fostering Agency
Registered Person	Action for Children Fostering Taith Newydd
Registered Manager	Matthew Lewis
Date of previous CSSIW inspection	29/03/2016
Dates of visits for this inspection	27/03/2018; 28/03/2018; 29/03/2018
Operating Language of the service	English
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	The service is working toward an 'active offer' of the Welsh language.

No noncompliance records found in Open status.