

Care service inspection report

Full inspection

Fostering Service - Kirkwall Fostering Service

School Place
Kirkwall

Service provided by: Orkney Islands Council

Service provider number: SP2003001951

Care service number: CS2004082094

Inspection Visit Type: Announced (Short Notice)

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and set out improvements that must be made. We also investigate complaints about care services and take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

Contact Us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

www.careinspectorate.com

 [@careinspect](https://twitter.com/careinspect)

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	5	Very Good

What the service does well

The staff and management are committed to good outcomes for children and young people and are effective in delivering opportunities for this to be realised. The service ensured that children and young people remained central to the decision making process.

There are good training opportunities for foster carers and support groups are valued by them. Collaborative working is a positive aspect of the service, with foster carers being very well supported to meet children's needs.

Regular sharing of expertise and information with neighbouring local authorities had been established, and we were told this was beneficial. For example, there were now more opportunities to discuss service development regarding policy reviews and progressing kinship care arrangements. These links also made it easier to share good practice and provided additional professional support to workers and managers.

What the service could do better

The service continues to promote participation for carers, children and young people. Their current engagement methods are good, and the service is building new approaches to strengthen feedback from a range of relevant individuals. Given the difficulties associated with maintaining confidentiality in a small island setting, the service needs to do more to ensure that everyone feels that their voice is heard.

The service should explore ways to enable the separate views and recordings of foster carers, the children they care for and other significant people to be submitted for foster carer reviews. This should sit alongside the social workers report for the carers review. This would enable a more independent account of the care and support provided within the fostering environment.

To ensure that foster carers fully understand their role in terms of keeping children safe, the service should develop a system to ensure that a safe caring family policy is completed while the Form F assessment is being completed.

It is necessary that the service continues to examine the current certificate of any applicant or foster carer who owns a firearm, and that a copy of this placed on file. However, the risks associated with this area of assessment need to be outlined more explicitly as reported under area for improvement, Quality Theme 1 - Statement 2.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The service has developed the Intensive fostering service and it is now operational. Two intensive foster carer households have been approved since the last inspection, and the social worker responsible for this service continues to provide very good advice and support. This is an extension of the current fostering provision, and aims to provide family based care for children and young people who require a high level of intensive care and support. The service also offers an alternative to children being placed out with Orkney Islands Council and as a result it enables them to remain connected to their local community.

Four mainstream foster carer households have also been approved since the last inspection which is very encouraging, and holds testament to the good work of the fostering and adoption team.

Recruiting and retaining foster carers and adopters remains a priority within the service. An increase in adoption and fostering applications had been recorded this year with several prospective adopters progressing to the preparation stage. However the capacity of the service to allocate assessments is limited due to current staffing arrangements. Management told us that they were looking closely at ways to resolve this issue in recognition of adoption support being a lifelong service.

Conclusion

The fostering service continues to provide very good quality of care and support to their foster carers and children, and outcomes for children remain very good. The team are committed to further improving their service.

When we raised any areas of concern about practice the service took immediate action to review and address their procedures. They also demonstrated commitment to act promptly on areas for development we made during feedback to the manager.

1 About the service we inspected

Orkney Islands Council Fostering Service comprises of an operational manager, two fostering and adoption social workers, and a social worker responsible for the Intensive fostering service. Their work is overseen by the principal social worker and service manager for children's services.

The team work closely alongside children and families social workers who are based in the same building. The service has also had the opportunity to work alongside a qualified Social Pedagogue for the past three years. This initiative was to take forward the work of the Fostering Networks 'Head, Heard, Hands Programme to provide a different way of engaging with children, young people and foster carers. We were told that sound progress had been made and positive changes to areas of practice had been embedded within the service. The success and impact of the programme is currently being externally evaluated to assess the effectiveness and measure success. .

When required, the service also has access to a social work assistant who is part of the wider resource team, and the support offered is valued. Orkney fostering service commissions the work of an experienced independent social worker to carry out for example, specialised training, consultations and chair important meetings.

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 Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 (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 5 - Very 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

This short announced inspection commenced on the 9 November 2015. Feedback was given to the manager of the service on 25 November 2015. As part of the inspection, we took account of the completed annual return and self-assessment forms that we asked the provider to complete and submit to us in advance. Prior to the inspection we asked the manager to send out questionnaires to, foster carers and panel members. During the inspection we also sent out questionnaires to two placing social workers and one was returned.

We asked the manager to send out six care service questionnaires to staff and we received six back, completed prior to the inspection.

During this inspection we gathered evidence from various sources, including:
We met with / spoke with:

- Manager of the service
- Fostering and adoption social workers, in a group and individually
- The social worker responsible for the intensive fostering service
- Social work assistant
- Social pedagogy worker
- Two placing social workers
- Principle educational psychologist
- Educational psychologist
- Children's advocacy worker
- Attended a team meeting
- Home visit with foster carers and met with the children placed
- We met with five foster carers.

We examined relevant documentation including:

- Participation strategy
- Two foster carers files and the files of the children placed
- Staff team meeting minutes
- Staff training and supervision records
- Carer supervision records and records of training
- Support plans for foster carers
- Support group minutes
- Policy, standards and procedures for the Intensive fostering service
- Foster carer review paperwork
- Minutes from adoption and fostering panels
- Minutes from a sudden end of placement meeting
- Fostering and adoption newsletter
- Minutes from the permanence working group
- Registration certificate.

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.firescotland.gov.uk

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 service provider identified what they thought they did well, some areas for development and any changes they had planned.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

We received the following views from foster carers about their experience with the service. Their comments included:

"Introductory visits for the child was well planned, this helped ease the transition and we have very good communication"

"My perception is not that we are clients or contractors in this service, we are all supported and encouraged to feel and behave as team members and drive the culture, as least as much as the professional team"

"The service and social workers care about the children there is no question about that. It can be frustrating waiting for decisions to be made about the child, and the impact this has on their wellbeing"

"The staff do all they can to support us, they respond quickly to any crisis and there is an excellent out of hours system".

Further views from foster carers, panel members and social workers are provided throughout the report.

Taking carers' views into account

We asked the manager to send out questionnaires to birth family members, but none were returned.

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 examined this statement at the time of the last inspection and concluded that the service provided very good opportunities for people who use the service to influence their care and support. During this inspection we confirmed that foster carers, children and young people continued to have very good opportunities to assess and improve the quality of support within the service.

We noted that the service continued to engage with foster carers and young people and considered participation 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.

Participation surveys, newsletters, 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 developments in the service, and express their views about a range of issues. Foster carers told us that they felt well informed about what was happening within the service and told us that their views were listened to.

Foster carers told us:

"Managers attend our support group at times, and keep us up to date with developments"

"Following feedback some of us (foster carers) met with the chair of the children's panel to help them, and us get a better understanding of our role during children's panels".

Foster carer support groups were held regularly with good attendance. Foster carers told us that they valued this opportunity to come together, and confirmed that they could express their views without difficulty. We looked at the agenda for one of the groups and noted purposeful discussion around the annual participation survey for foster carers, and consultation regarding updating the format for foster carer review paperwork. This forum gave opportunities for foster carers to share skills and experience and put forward any ideas for improvement.

Although foster carers valued support groups and appreciated input from various speakers and training provided, they were motivated and encouraged to make arrangements to strengthen their own informal network in a less structured setting. We were told this had been taken forward and allowed further opportunity for feedback on the quality of care and support provided by the service.

The fostering and adoption service had a participation strategy which was updated annually and clearly set out the strategy aims and principles of participation. Key priorities for 2015 were recorded within the report including developments being taken forward as a result of feedback. For example, 'ensuring that robust information is provided to all foster carers about any child placed with them.'

Individuals' views were gathered via questionnaires during stages of the assessment process, from application to preparation groups through to panel approval. Foster carers we spoke with, and feedback we examined, demonstrated people were very satisfied with the service they had received, and

that they had benefited from linking up with experienced foster carers at early stages such as preparation groups. We were told that as a result of feedback, changes had been made to carer training and support groups in terms of days and timings where possible. This had allowed foster carers to attend important forums and essential training alongside their work commitments.

We found good and varied approaches to ensuring young people could express their views about the service and contribute to its development. Central to this was young people's involvement in agreeing and reviewing their care plan. Care plans contained good details about young people's interests and what was important to them.

Young people were supported to express their views, for example they were encouraged to prepare 'have your say' paperwork prior to their Looked after and accommodated reviews (LAAC). This gave children and young people the opportunity to express their views and influence their care plan quite easily.

We were informed, and saw evidence of children and young people having access to independent advocacy when required. When appropriate, children were seen out with the fostering environment to give them the opportunity to speak openly about any aspect of their daily life. Foster carers also participated in children's LAAC reviews, providing essential information about the child's development and wellbeing. This helped inform the decision making process and to explore options for any additional support required.

There was evidence of some young people contributing to their foster carers' annual review alongside the views of their placing social workers. The forms for children to make their contributions had been adapted by the fostering social worker. This allowed for more age appropriate responses, and gave opportunities for the young person to communicate their view more effectively about the care fostering environment. Information from placing social workers and children we inspected showed a good level of satisfaction regarding the care and support provided.

Placing social workers commented:

"The foster carers are excellent and they have formed positive attachments

with the children. I observe very good interaction during my visits, and they communicate with me about the children really well".

We saw very good examples of foster carers birth children being encouraged to express their views through individual interventions with workers, and foster carers told us this had been beneficial. This year the service had seen an increase in the numbers of foster carers being approved with birth children. Consequently a more structured group approach is required, please see area for improvement.

Foster carers told us they were encouraged to feedback on the quality of staff at their annual review and through the complaints procedure if they were unhappy. In addition, foster carers told us that they felt staff listened to them and valued their opinions, which helped ensure the best outcomes for the children and young people they care for.

Areas for improvement

The service had identified a worker to take forward the development of a forum for the birth children of foster carers. This is in recognition of the impact fostering can have on the whole family, and as a result of the increase in numbers of birth children. This area will be looked at during the next service inspection.

Management told us that foster carer review paperwork is currently under review. The service aims to explore ways to enable the separate views and recordings of foster carers, the children they care for and other significant people to be submitted for foster carer reviews. These should sit alongside the fostering social workers report. This will provide a more consistent and independent account of the care and support provided.

Grade

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

We found the services performance in relation to this Quality statement was very good.

At the start of their placement children and young people were registered with a local GP and other health care services including a dentist and optician. The service had good links with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), LAAC (Looked After and Accommodated Children) nurses, and other specialist health services. We saw very good evidence of collaborative working to ensure that young people with complex emotional needs were being addressed.

The fostering service employed an experienced independent social worker who was commissioned to offer specialist training and consultations to foster carers and staff when required. This enabled strategies to be implemented to support children who had experienced trauma and emotional distress. Foster carers valued this opportunity, and gave examples of how specialist training had increased their awareness and helped meet the needs of vulnerable children.

The service ensured that young people's needs were reviewed by inviting all relevant parties to a six weekly post placement meetings. This allowed appropriate discussion around any issues such as the child's education plan, contact arrangements and general wellbeing. The files we examined also contained completed placement agreements that reflected the support to be provided to the child and clearly set out roles and expectations.

We found that LAAC reviews for children were being held regularly, with children being supported to express their views. In discussion with the children and young people's advocacy worker, we heard some very good examples of children being prepared for legal hearings and this being managed

appropriately and sensitively. This enabled children to be feel less anxious and allowed them to be more involved when important decisions were being made about them. In addition, this was complimented by the foster carers report for LAAC review, which provided relevant information and ensured all views were taken into account to support the child to reach their potential.

We found that children's care plans were detailed and linked to 'Getting it right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) eight wellbeing indicators. These eight indicators are intended to provide a common language for practitioners, children and families, as well as ensuring that a holistic view of the child or young person's life and progress is being considered.

www.gov.scot/Topics/Young-People/gettingitright

This enabled children, with the support of carers and staff to set realistic targets for health, safety and activity. These were regularly monitored during carer supervision and children's LAAC reviews to.

Since the last inspection a permanence planning working group has been established. This is a professional multi-disciplinary group that tracks all permanence cases to ensure timescales for reports, important meetings and decision making are not delayed for children and young people. For example, all children who had been accommodated for more than three months had a LAAC review to establish if a legal advice meeting was required to consider their route to alternative permanent care. The group also enables information and advice to be shared by a range of professionals and this should inform and enhance the child's assessment and care plan.

We found good management of contact with birth families with regular, appropriate contact for the children and young people we were tracking. There was also encouraging evidence of risk assessments being undertaken prior to children and young people being placed. Foster carers were also noted to have copies of the consent to treatment for the children in their care which was positive.

Some foster carers, who had supported children transition to adoption, remained in contact in recognition of the importance of the attachment that the children had with foster carers. Adopters felt reassured that they could call foster carers for advice during the early stages of the adoption when still getting to know their child. We saw evidence of these arrangements working very well, which in turn enabled the child to settle quicker and experience less anxiety. Foster carers we visited were observed to be providing nurturing and safe environments for children and young people, and were very good advocates for the children in their care. They respected the choices made by young people and permissions given by birth parents.

Risk assessments were in place for children who had complex needs or exhibited distressed behaviour. During the inspection we noted that safer caring was discussed appropriately during preparation stages and carer supervision. Foster carers told us that they were very well supported to provide good outcomes for children and young people. This included regular joint visits from placing social workers and fostering social workers relative to the needs of the child. Foster carers were kept up to date with any changes to the child's care plan, and we saw strong evidence of information sharing and planning relating to the permanence process.

Adoption and fostering social workers completed the assessments for potential foster carers within a six month timescale where possible. Any delays were recorded and reasons for this shared with the manager and applicant. Foster carers told us that preparation groups had been helpful; in particular they cited input from experienced foster carers who could share openly about the rewards and challenges of fostering.

Children were encouraged to try out new activities and were supported to develop skills and interests. A range of summer activities had taken place for children and young people, in which they enjoyed a variety of challenges and creative workshops. These opportunities help children and young people to overcome fears, build relationships and enhance their self-esteem. We were told by a worker involved in these events that the children and young people had requested more activity based forums, and that the service were committed to exploring further opportunities.

To help improve outcomes for looked after children within the school setting, the service had taken forward a new initiative. Educational psychologists and fostering and adoption social workers were exploring ways to support children and young people to have a more nurturing experience within their learning environment. This involved holding workshops for a group of interested teachers to increase their capacity to understand more about children whose past experiences had impacted negatively on their ability to learn. It is not yet possible to measure the success of this initiative; however the service is well placed to make further progress. We will look at this area during next years' service inspection.

Areas for improvement

To ensure that foster carers fully understand their role in terms of keeping children safe, the service should develop a system to ensure that a safe caring family policy is completed during the Form F assessment stage.

The service should consider inviting the children's advocacy worker to preparation groups for potential foster carers to establish links at an early stage.

It is necessary that the service should continue to see the current certificate for any applicant or foster carer who owns a firearm, and that a copy of this placed on file. However, the risks associated with this area of assessment need to be outlined more explicitly. In foster placements where licenced firearms are kept, a risk assessment should be carried out which focuses specifically on the risks this presents to children in care. When we discussed this with management, they acknowledged our concerns and intend to take action to address this area of practice.

Grade

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 1

"We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service."

Service strengths

The service promotes the involvement of young people in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service. Recently a young person with care experience had taken part in the recruitment of intensive foster carers during the assessment centre interviews. A foster carer had also been involved in the interview process for a social worker being appointed for the adoption and fostering team.

The evidence in Quality Theme 1 - Statement 1 in relation to consultation and participation is also relevant to this statement.

Areas for improvement

The evidence in Quality Theme 1 - Statement 1 in relation to consultation and participation is relevant to this statement.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 3

"We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice."

Service strengths

We found the service continued to have an experienced, skilled and motivated staff group who worked effectively as a team. As a result foster carers, children and young people were very well supported to meet children's needs. We met with fostering and adoption workers as a group and spoke with some staff on an individual basis. We saw that the service had provided staff and foster carers with relevant professional training, alongside opportunities for reflection and discussion to ensure best practice was achieved. This has informed the grade of very good for this statement.

Staff presented themselves to us as knowledgeable and had a clear awareness of the National Care Standards, current legislation and best practice initiatives. All staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council as required, and they worked to appropriate Codes of Practice. Staff benefited from a wide range of training opportunities both internal and external that supported them in the work they did. Staff we spoke with confirmed they received regular and effective supervision. They also said they valued the opportunity for informal supervision from the manager and colleagues.

Staff members commented:

"Joint team meetings with children and families social workers is helpful, we also have joint training and visits to foster carers. Communication between us is good"

"Workers in the fostering and adoption team go above and beyond what is expected of them, especially when it comes to working weekends, people are very committed to supporting children and carers".

Staff advised that morale remained good, although an increase in referrals and mandatory training had caused tension by impacting on staff capacity to carry out operational tasks. These issues had been raised with senior management and staff advised they had been responded to appropriately.

Minutes we examined from staff team meetings and staff development sessions were detailed, well-structured and showed reflective discussion had taken place with full consideration being given to the needs of children and foster carers. This included relevant items such as the matching process, office staffing and issues relating to individual cases. To ensure continuity of practice and shared professional standards, full discussion had taken place regarding the assessment of potential foster carers. We were told this had been beneficial and enabled sharing of experience between social workers. Staff clearly valued these opportunities to come together, and in discussion impressed us as motivated to improve areas of practice.

Staff presented as skilled, knowledgeable and well placed to support carers and children. We saw some very good outcomes for children who were benefiting from specific interventions being provided by workers suitably qualified to address individual need. This targeted approach allows new strategies to be implemented and helps to sustain placements during difficult times.

Placing social workers and foster carers confirmed that staff adopted a professional approach:

"The support and care provided to the carers is second to none, they were very well prepared for the child and knew the potential pitfalls"

"Our social worker supported our birth child to express his feelings, and these sessions were very helpful"

"When we have children in our care I tend to keep in touch with the child's social worker so I can be kept up to speed, our own social worker is also excellent at checking on things for us if we are not sure."

Carers had individual training plans in addition to the core training priorities set by the service. For example, this year's training included social pedagogy training, GIRFEC wellbeing event, child protection and social media. The Intensive fostering service had also implemented important online training, which we were told carers found mostly beneficial.

As previously highlighted, and when required, foster carers can request individual consultation specifically tailored to meet the needs of the child, and there was clear evidence of close joint working between agencies. This reinforced the view that staff and carers are both knowledgeable and professional.

The service told us that all approved foster carers and staff were provided with a subscription to the 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>)

Access to this type of independent organisation enabled carers and staff to receive a wide range of publications and to attend additional training events. This initiative also helped to ensure that carers' rights were preserved.

To ensure young peoples' safety and wellbeing, comprehensive child protection policies and procedures were in place, and all carers and staff undertook multi-agency child protection training. To strengthen this area social media training had being introduced to the service, and this will also cover areas such as child sexual exploitation.

Areas for improvement

The service aims to continue to develop a training plan for the fostering service and include carers in the planning and delivery.

Social media training should also include the older birth children of foster carers to ensure awareness is raised within the entire fostering household.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

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 management and leadership of the service."

Service strengths

The evidence in Quality Theme 1 - Statement 1 in relation to consultation and participation is relevant to this statement.

Areas for improvement

The evidence in Quality Theme 1 - Statement 1 in relation to consultation and participation is relevant to this statement.

Grade

5 - Very 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

Based on our findings, we found the service performance was of a very good standard.

We found that the assessment of new foster carers was robust and that mandatory checks were carried out to ensure suitability for caring for vulnerable children. Analysis of strengths and any areas for development were clearly recorded. The registered manager had introduced a quality assurance system to enable any enquiry to be tracked to ensure the process was progressing within set timescales. This was monitored through team meetings and staff supervision.

The service considered feedback from a variety of sources including stakeholders, placing social workers, foster carers, prospective and approved adopters and reported findings in their participation strategy. These findings were also used to contribute to the integrated children's services plan and were used to make improvements in key areas. For example, in improving plans for the recruitment of foster carers and identifying training for staff and carers.

Foster carers received at least one unannounced visit each year. These visits include a review of the placement environment to ensure it was safe and fit for purpose. We noted that social workers visited at a time when foster children were at home to allow them to record their views and comment on their presentation. Planned visits were more frequent and continued to be used to review outcomes, ensure support arrangements were effective and to gather views on key issues.

Second opinion visits were in place to provide an important quality assurance mechanism for all reports being presented to panel. This allowed prospective foster carers to provide their views on the assessment process directly to the

management and leadership within the service.

The registered manager quality assured all paperwork being sent to the fostering and permanence panel. If any gaps or areas of uncertainty were found in assessment reports these would be clarified prior to panel. This approach ensured that the decision making process was not delayed for the applicants.

The fostering and permanence panel also provided a further important quality assurance mechanism for the service. Unfortunately we were unable to observe a panel during this inspection. However, minutes of the adoption and permanence panel were detailed, and reflected thorough discussion and sound recommendations.

The chair of the panel was independent and very experienced and this brought an objective view of quality issues within the service. Returned questionnaires from panel members sent out prior to the inspection, confirmed that there is very good communication between the registered manager and panel members.

Business meetings were held prior to, and following each adoption and permanence panel, when full discussion was held regarding all information being presented to panel. These meetings also give opportunity for the panel to be informed of any service developments, and for the registered manager to obtain feedback on the quality of assessments and any action that needed to be taken.

Panel members commented:

"Of particular note is the professional fostering service which is being developed. The Panel have been kept fully informed about developments so that they were prepared for the first assessments. This innovative practice, which is being continued, is to be commended"

"From what I have seen so far, the standard is high within the adoption and fostering service in Orkney. The reports I have read have been extensive and full. The child/rens welfare is paramount and the foster carers appear to be given support as they need/require."

We were advised that panel membership had increased this year which brought additional skills and experience. Important training had taken place for panel members such as GIRFEC training and child protection. Active members of the fostering and permanence panel, had experience of being foster carers or adopters. This specialist knowledge was useful, and assisted these individuals when they reported on the quality of staffing in the service. The agency decision maker carried out a further role in quality assurance prior to decision-making.

When the unplanned ending of a placement occurred, and a child was moved as a result, meetings were convened to consider the sudden change in circumstances. These were chaired independently, and minutes we examined demonstrated sensitive and thorough discussion, with careful consideration being given to participants' opinions and observations. The minute also highlighted areas for future learning for all involved, and we noted important changes being made to particular areas of practice as a result.

Areas for improvement

The service aims to provide supervision for panel members, to enable reflective discussion which will include areas for professional development.

We noted that foster carer supervision recordings were included in carer case notes and held within the system. A separate system should be developed for these recordings to enable foster carers to agree with the contents and any actions to be taken. We discussed this with management who aim to take this forward.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0

Number of recommendations - 0

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

Previous requirements

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

Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

6 Complaints

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

7 Enforcements

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

8 Additional Information

There is no additional information.

9 Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
27 Feb 2015	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
13 Mar 2014	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
8 Mar 2012	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very Good
		Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good
18 Aug 2010	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	4 - Good
7 Oct 2009	Announced	Care and support	4 - Good
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	3 - Adequate
		Management and Leadership	3 - Adequate
12 Nov 2008	Announced	Care and support	3 - Adequate
		Environment	Not Assessed
		Staffing	4 - Good
		Management and Leadership	3 - Adequate

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

You can also read more about our work online.

Contact Us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

www.careinspectorate.com

 @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is c?nain eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.