

Care service inspection report

Full inspection

Cornerstone Fostering and Family Placement Service Fostering Service

Suite 9 Sovereign House Academy Road Irvine



Service provided by: Cornerstone Community Care

Service provider number: SP2003000013

Care service number: CS2009234269

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



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 6 Excellent

Quality of management and leadership N/A

What the service does well

Cornerstone Fostering and Family Placement Service was a proactive and preemptive service in that it provided respite foster care support for children and young people who lived at home. Foster carers were highly trained and supported to provide exceptional levels of support and intervention to children and young people.

What the service could do better

Cornerstone was in the process of developing their child protection policy and training to reflect child sexual exploitation and the service expectations of staff and foster carers in relation to this.

We spoke with the service about streamlining paperwork, such as risk assessment documents, to be more integrated into safer caring practices.

What the service has done since the last inspection

The service had further developed foster carer participation. They had developed staff appraisals to include a 360 degree approach to reviews.

Inspection report

Conclusion

Several areas of exceptional practice were identified during this inspection. The service should continue to drive the service forward, identifying areas of innovation and develop these.

1 About the service we inspected

The Care Inspectorate regulates care services in Scotland. Information about all care services is available on our website at www.careinspectorate.com

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

Cornerstone Fostering and Family Placement Service provides a fostering and family placement service for children and young people from birth to 18 years. The service recruits and supports foster carers and their families to provide respite foster care. The service works from an early intervention model and works with birth families fo support children to remain at home where possible.

The service is based in Irvine in North Ayrshire. The registered manager has overall responsibility for the service. The service manager has responsibility for the day-to-day organisation of the service and support and supervision of the staff team. The service manager is well supported in this role by the team leader and service administrator.

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 6 - Excellent Quality of management and leadership - N/A

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

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

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

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

What we did during the inspection

We wrote this report following a short notice announced inspection between 22 June and 28 June 2016 when we gave the service feedback. As part of the inspection we took account of the completed annual return and self-assessment forms that the service sent us.

During the process we gathered evidence from various sources, including the following:

We consulted with:

- Foster carers
- The registered manager
- The service manager
- The team leader
- Supervising social worker
- Children's social workers
- Panel representatives.

We also sampled documents which included:

- Information from consultations and surveys and questionnaires
- Complaints records
- Disruption meeting records
- Individual case samples (selected at random)
- Staff supervision records
- Staff training records

- Team meeting minutes
- Monitoring tools and quality assurance records.

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 submitted a full and considered self-assessment. We discussed how the self-assessment could be developed to become more outcome focused.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

Given the nature of the service provision, it was difficult to naturally access children and young people. However, we asked the service to offer all service users the inspector's contact details should they wish to make contact.

Foster carers overwhelmingly reported exceptional support and service provision from the service

Taking carers' views into account

We did not speak to any of the children or young people's family members during this inspection. We tried on several occasions to telephone carers; however, we were unsuccessful. Again, we asked that the inspector's details were passed on to birth families should they wish to make contact.

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 3

"We ensure that service users' health and wellbeing needs are met."

Service strengths

Cornerstone Fostering and Family Placement Service evidenced a very good performance in meeting service users health and wellbeing needs. We sampled foster carers and children's files and we spoke with managers, staff members and foster carers supporting children and young people.

The respite model of fostering provided to children and young people had been developed to promote their resilience and wellbeing and to support them to live within their families. As such, foster carers were remarkably skilled in working with both the child or young person and their family to achieve the best possible holistic outcomes. Further services had been developed as an extension of the fostering service, such as buddying support from foster carers to parents and mother and baby support groups. This fostering service was a model of its type at the time of inspection.

Foster carers were provided with an exceptionally high level of preparation and on-going training and development opportunities to continually progress their knowledge and skills. This was to support them to work effectively with birth parents whilst keeping the needs of the children and young people central to the service. Regular monitoring and supervision visits took place, some of which were unannounced. Comprehensive individualised safer caring documents were developed at introductions and help manage risk and uncertainty in their homes and for each child or young person to be clear about what was expected of them when they came to stay with them. Feedback from children and young

people's files indicated that they felt safe and that they trusted their foster carers to look after them. We could see from the preparation work that had been undertaken that they knew what to expect when moving to placement and that foster carer profiles helped them to prepare for the move.

There was an outstanding level of support to foster carers to meet the needs of the children, with staff being on hand at all times should they be required to provide support. A very high level of good quality information is fed back into children's meetings and foster carers told us that they felt that their views were sought and respected. Regular respite review meetings were held and all aspects of the placement were considered to ensure that the needs of the child were being met.

Foster carers told us that they were provided with clear needs led information which was sophisticatedly matched with their identified skills base before placements began. We found the matching process was exceptionally clear and that this information was tracked, monitored and reviewed as the placement progressed. Children and foster carers files indicated that matching was entirely needs led and that there was exceptional consideration and preparation of any identified risks. This supported foster carers to be highly attuned to the needs of the children and young people and foster carers told us that they felt notably prepared to care for the children and young people they were looking after.

Foster carers told us that they felt actively empowered by the service to advocate on behalf of the children and young people they were supporting to ensure that their health and wellbeing needs were being identified and met. They also told us that they felt strongly assured in accessing services for children and young people directly or with the support of their worker, where appropriate. Foster carers and young people knew how they could access advocacy support and advice and we saw that strong links had been developed with the independent service that provided this.

Foster carers provided a clear and detailed monthly update of children and young people's progress or any challenges that had been apparent in placement. Through this foster carers were tracking the progress of children and young people in an outcome focused way and is offered an early opportunity to

identify and raise any concerns they may have. The information was shared with social work staff and this supported the ongoing development of the child's plan.

Child protection policies, procedures and systems were in place and foster carers were trained and were acutely aware of the expectations of them in reporting and keeping children safe, should a child protection concern arise.

Form F's, the form that the service used to assess foster carer applicants, demonstrated a sophisticated level of analysis that were of a high quality. They were undertaken by IFA's (independent Form F assessors) who were employed by the service directly. An exceptional level of quality assurance was afforded to the assessment process with detailed and thorough 2nd opinion visits being undertaken. Files were robust and we could see that any outstanding identified action for children was being identified in the case notes and followed up quickly, ensuring needs were being identified and promptly met.

Several programs have been developed from the service to support parents. Some of the service developments have included specific interventions with time limited respite and also linking with foster carers for moral support. There had been a mother and baby support group with support from foster carers for older siblings. The service also provides youth clubs as part of that package. These aspects of additional support to children and young people set the service apart in their provision.

Reporting on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Cornerstone was in the process of developing their policy in relation to Child Sexual Exploitation. We looked at the proposal for this and found it to be clear and had a strategy for all staff and foster carers to follow in the event that they had a concern. The CSE policy was being approved, formed part of the overarching child protection policy and this happened in the process of the inspection.

All staff members in the fostering service had accessed CEOPs training and were waiting for child sexual exploitation training. We spoke with a number of staff who had completed the training and had found it useful in their work. All

staff and foster carers evidenced a good insight to the risks and vulnerability indicators of CSE and advised that they would follow current child protection reporting procedures.

Appropriate planning had taken place, aimed at keeping children safe and risk management processes put in place where this was deemed necessary. Children and young people were receiving input about the risks in relation to CSE through health and police training in their schools.

Areas for improvement

Cornerstone was in the process of developing their child protection policy and training to reflect child sexual exploitation and the service expectations of staff and foster carers in relation to this.

We spoke with the service about streamlining paperwork, such as risk assessment documents, to be more integrated into safer caring practices.

Cornerstone was in the process of redeveloping the child's plan documents to reflect current best practice under GIRFEC. This was to enable outcomes to be tracked and identified.

We spoke with the service about the ongoing development and use of foster carer chronologies.

Grade

5 - Very Good

Number of requirements - 0 Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 5

"We respond to service users' care and support needs using person centered values."

Service strengths

The service evidenced it was performing exceptionally in the areas relevant to this statement. We spoke with foster carers, managers and staff members. We sampled information packs provided to foster carers, children and young people using the service and looked at how children and young people were being supported to achieve their potential in their placements.

Placements were made and skilfully matched based upon the individual child's level of need. Matching proformas exceptionally outlined and assessed the skills of the foster carer to meet the needs of the child and full consideration was given to the child and their family values. Wellbeing goals identified by the child or young person's social worker and family ensured that foster carers were able to skilfully track the progress of children and young people in an outcome focused way and is offered the earliest opportunities to identify and raise any concerns they may have. We found the matching process was exceptionally clear and that this information was tracked, monitored and reviewed as the placement progressed.

Foster carers told us that they were provided with clear needs led information which was sophisticatedly matched with their identified skills base before placements began. There was a comprehensive plan for introductions which included support for birth parents and these were managed proficiently and at the pace of the child or young person. Foster carers were introduced to the child's family at this time. Risk and need were clearly identified and foster carers told us that this allowed them to feel notably prepared for the fostering task.

Highly detailed initial placement agreements, day-to-day arrangements and a the social work care plan for the child or young person was in put in place before the placement commenced, which provided exceptional clarity about the expectations of the child or young person and the foster carer. The high level of preparation supported excellent respite matches and long term relationships between foster carers and children and young people.

Children and young people were having regular LAAC reviews and Cornerstone foster carers attended these, where possible, and contributed to the development of their plans. Progress was identified and tracked using child's plans which identified person centred outcomes. Regular review meetings were being held by the service and these were directed using the child's plan in order to track outcomes. Support for foster carers to have their views heard was provided through these meetings, foster carer support groups and ongoing contact with their support workers who were exceptionally skilled at this. Significant events in placement were identified and pulled from foster carer updates and were drawn into a chronology for the child identifying any triggers or unmet needs. This information was clearly, risk aware and the foster carers were then supported to follow these areas up and support the child or young person.

Exceptional quality training and supports were provided to foster carers. The main approaches to practice across the service were based upon person centred values and it was apparent that the service had the best interest of the children and young people using the service at the centre of their work. Cornerstone staff developed and provided skills to foster training to foster carers and this took account of wide and varied experiences from foster carers and children and young people. The training was tailored to support the high level of risk and need foster carers were working under and offered an outstanding amount of input for foster carers to work with families with complex needs.

Regular fostering reviews/supervision supported foster carers to competently explore the level of care they were providing and to evaluate the impact that this was having on the children they cared for; we found this to be explicit in supervision records. We found that the exceptionally high level of training and support provided to foster carers was supporting children and young people to have respite in nurturing homes and experience warm, caring environments. We found foster carers to be remarkably informed about the care that they were providing to children and young people and the reasons for it. This supported attuned relationships between carers and children and young people.

Inspection report

Peer support for foster carers was provided on a quarterly basis through the foster carers' forum. These events were used in the ways that foster carers found most helpful and included talks and training events. Foster carers told us that they felt listened to, heard and valued as an asset of the service. Overall, we found Cornerstone foster carers to be exceptionally well trained and uniquely supported in the individualised care and support they were providing to children and young people.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to develop the excellent practice in this area.

Grade

6 - Excellent

Number of requirements - 0 Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 6 - Excellent

Statement 3

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

Service strengths

We felt that the service was performing exceptionally under this statement. We sampled staff training and development records, supervision and appraisal records, foster carers and children's files and we spoke with managers, staff members and foster carers.

All staff members were professionally qualified and registered with their relevant professional bodies. We found the staff team reflected an outstanding level of knowledge and experience in the area of respite fostering and they were extremely knowledgeable about the expectations of their role. Staff members were all active learners and members of various national best practice organisations which helped them to access any reading materials and kept them up to date with current trends. All staff members received regular supervision opportunities. They reported this as being of exceptional quality and we could see from files that sessions were being used effectively to support staff to continually reflect on their skills and development. Best practice was being discussed both formally in supervision and this was reflected in the informal discussions within the offices. One staff member told us:

'Above and beyond managerial support has made it possible for me to do my job under some extreme circumstances. I feel entirely supported and this makes me want to do a really good job in return. The only reason I am where I am today is because of the support my manager and the team have given me.'

The staff team undertook an extraordinary level of training and development which increased their skills and knowledge about supporting fosters carers to effectively evidence how they are achieving outcomes for children and young

people. This was clearly evidenced in the way they were supervising foster carers. The aim for the staff being that the foster carers could clearly and predictably evidence and identify how they were achieving outcomes for children and young people. We saw exceptional examples where this was being skilfully achieved by carers and this was significantly contributing to the overall outcomes, aims and objectives within the child's plan.

Where staff identified training it was sourced and also offered to foster carers as standard. A recent training course was accessed in pathological demand avoidance in order to better understand service delivery for a young person and was attended by the staff member and foster carer. This approach to providing training created excellent opportunities for foster carers to explore current concepts and network with other professionals. The staff team delivered a large amount of informed in-house training and were in the process of developing more programs as the needs of foster carers developed. Where foster carers had asked for specific training to support their understanding of the needs of a child or young person placed with them, the service either outsourced the training or developed an in-house program drafting in stakeholders, where appropriate. Foster carers consistently told us that the training provided to them was exceptional and integral to them being able to do their job effectively and meet the needs of the children and young people. Furthermore, that the staff team regularly went above and beyond what they would expect to ensure that they got access to the training that they identified.

Placing social workers reported excellent links with the service. They spoke very highly of the skills and knowledge of the staff team and the links that they had developed to support joined up working practices. This evidenced a strong holistic professional approach to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential.

We found that supervision notes were of an exceptionally high quality and evidenced analysis of foster carers' skills and abilities to support children and young people to achieve their potential. Staff members used current research in supervision with foster carers and encouraged foster carers to look at research and models of child development when considering the needs of children.

Foster carers spoke remarkably about the quality of their supervising social

workers. They told us that they felt entirely supported and that workers were always available for them, if required. They told us that the workers were highly skilled and exceptionally insightful about the needs of vulnerable children and young people and their families. Foster carers told us that this provided them with an all encompassing level of help and support to care for children and young people in placement.

Regular team meetings took place and the agenda included items such as foster carer reviews, referrals, workload management and any current challenges. Meetings offered staff an opportunity for peer support and exploration about ways in which they could improve the support systems in place for foster carers and children and young people. The staff team demonstrated that they were exceptionally committed to the ongoing development of the service to ensure that they were providing a sector leading package. One staff member told us:

'If they need it we will make it happen'

Staff were exceptionally motivated to do their very best in their job role. We found them to be passionate, knowledgeable and highly committed to the service. Their personnel files were personalised and achievements are noted and celebrated; as such, they showed an extraordinary level of motivation. Awards were given out at cornerstone's West of Scotland annual review the service and staff team had received many accolades through this forum.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to innovate and develop the staff team in this area.

Grade

6 - Excellent

Number of requirements - 0
Number of recommendations - 0

Statement 4

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

Service strengths

Overall, the service demonstrated an excellent performance in relation to this statement.

It was especially apparent throughout the inspection that children, young people and their family's interests were kept at the very heart of the work was being undertaken within Cornerstone Fostering and Family Placement Service. Their views were explicitly evident throughout every decision-making forum and we could see from files that they were fully considered and sensitively respected. There were various ways for service users and their families to feedback on the service and the service was striving to develop more ways of supporting this to happen. We found that the staff team were inherently respectful of children and young people's birth families and we regularly heard them say things like 'with mum's permission' and 'I will ask gran about that'.

The nature of the service meant that most of the foster carers worked full-time as well as providing respite, and were recruited under these circumstances. The service fully respected and supported this and were mindful throughout the inspection of the other commitments foster carers had.

Birth families were respectfully given highly sensitive support from staff and foster carers when they needed it. We could see from meeting minutes that children and young people felt able to ask staff and foster carers for additional support, help and advice and that they were treated with dignity and respect in managing their lives. Families and close relationships were included in this approach and that both foster carers and the staff were respectful of the significant people in their lives. This was identified as a particularly remarkable area of practice for both staff and foster carers.

Staff told us that they inherently felt listened to and that their opinions were sought out and exceptionally valued, furthermore they felt that they

were influential to service development. Staff told us that they had supportive and helpful relationships within their own and the teams they worked alongside. This supported a positive and highly motivated culture and we found the staff team to have an excellent and informed approach to practice, high morale and motivation to support children and young people to achieve their maximum potential.

Foster carers told us that they felt highly respected and included in service developments. They reported that they were treated with the utmost respect by their supervising worker and that they felt listened to and heard when they attended meetings. They were regularly consulted about service developments and that the service regarded their views exceptionally highly. We found lots of evidence of positive support and encouragement for foster carers. An example of this was through an email to the foster carer:

'Brilliant work, so you are currently working towards supporting the following outcomes - managing money and developing independence.'

An exceptional level of excellent communication from the service helped carers to feel respected and valued. We found from our discussions that carers were very respectful of the children and young people they cared for and for their families. Carers advocated for children and young people strongly and appropriately and they told us that they were actively encouraged by the service to do so. This helped them to feel empowered when supporting them get their needs met.

The service supported foster carers to develop and build upon their relationships with birth parents, family and their friends. Foster carers were encouraged to visit birth families homes during introductory parts to allow birth families to get to know the carers and also to allow the carers to gather a sense of the child or young person's home life. This supported excellent transitions between home and respite and helped the child or young person when they were experiencing difficulties at home. We spoke with foster carers who were exceptionally positive about supporting young people's important relationships.

Both foster carers and staff told us that their experiences at the fostering panel

were very positive and respectful.

Regular celebration events were held, both for foster carers and for children and young people using the service. These were also used as opportunities to gather feedback to further develop the service.

The service had access to a 'quality of life' fund. This was used to purchase clothing and footwear for children who required it. Foster carers were able to access this fund discreetly. Other funding was accessed by the service to ensure that all children and their family members received a gift at Christmas time.

Areas for improvement

The service should continue to develop the excellent practice in this area.

As part of their ongoing development plan the service were looking at ways they could continue to develop whole family support for foster families.

Grade

6 - Excellent

Number of requirements - 0 Number of recommendations - 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Quality theme not assessed

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

Previous requirements

There are no outstanding 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	Туре	Gradings	
10 Aug 2015	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good Not Assessed 5 - Very Good 5 - Very Good
1 Jul 2014	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good Not Assessed 5 - Very Good 5 - Very Good
21 Oct 2013	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and Leadership	5 - Very Good Not Assessed 5 - Very Good 5 - Very Good
29 Nov 2011	Announced (Short Notice)	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and Leadership	4 - Good Not Assessed 5 - Very Good Not Assessed
31 Dec 2010	Announced	Care and support Environment Staffing Management and Leadership	4 - Good Not Assessed 4 - Good 4 - Good

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 DD14NY

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 cànain eile ma nithear jarrtas

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

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

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.