

## Carolina House Trust - Fostering Fostering Service

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**Type of inspection:**

Announced (short notice)

**Completed on:**

9 July 2019

**Service provided by:**

Carolina House Trust

**Service provider number:**

SP2003001613

**Service no:**

CS2004084075

## About the service

Carolina House Trust - Fostering registered with the Care Commission in 2005 and transferred its registration to the Care Inspectorate in 2011. The service is provided by Carolina House Trust, a charitable organisation which provides a range of services for children and young people.

The fostering service recruits, approves and supports foster carers across a number of local authority areas.

At the time of inspection there were 29 foster care households and 35 children and young people were being supported in placements.

## What people told us

We spoke with two young people and six carers during the inspection, they were largely positive about the care and support they received. Their views are reflected in the content of this report.

## Self assessment

The service was not asked to provide a self assessment for this inspection.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	4 - Good
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	4 - Good

## Quality of care and support

### Findings from the inspection

There was consistent evidence of children and young people achieving good outcomes. We could see that children and young people were experiencing nurturing care from high quality carers. We also found lots of good evidence of children and young people being active, pursuing interests and developing good relationships with peers. We heard about the positive part played by carers and staff in supporting contact with birth family, working closely with other professionals to do this in the best interests of the children.

For some young people outcomes were less positive and there have been placement breakdowns in the past year which has increased the number of placements for children and young people. There have also been times where young people have not been safe, where their own risk-taking behaviours have affected their experience and the feeling of safety for carers.

There were two clear strengths evident in relation to care and support:

**Training opportunities for carers** – We heard consistently that carers were getting access to the training they wanted and the use of 1:1 sessions to learn from direct experiences was also evident in the files we looked at. The majority of evidence pointed to a strong picture in relation to relevance and regularity of learning opportunities.

**Opportunities to participate** – For both carers and children/young people we found very good evidence of efforts to engage with fostering families through consultations, newsletters, interviewing staff and events. In relation to the latter this featured highly in the positive feedback we considered during the inspection. There were however some contra indicators with regards to communication – see below.

There were also two clear areas for improvement in relation to care and support:

**Communication** – The service already knows that due to staffing issues communication with carers is inconsistent and this relates to both maintaining links and the style of communication. Some carers had issue with the tone and style of communication, and this was affecting their relationships with staff.

**Support for carers** – There has been a significant effort on the part of staff to try to prevent the impact of staffing issues. For some this effort has been successful but there is a significant cohort of carers for whom support has dipped. For some this has not had an adverse effect but for others there were consequences for relationships between carers and children.

We urge the service to communicate clearly and honestly about the challenges and reassert their commitment to the high level of support which reflects the team's aspiration.

## Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

## Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 – good

## Quality of staffing

This quality theme was not assessed.

## Quality of management and leadership

### Findings from the inspection

We identified two strengths in relation to management and leadership which have the potential to impact positively:

**A clearly articulated vision for the service** - We considered that managers were very clear about what they wanted to achieve and what they needed to do to get there. They were clear about what they wanted for children and young people and how they could best support carers to provide the required quality of care. They also identified approaches and underpinning knowledge they felt was key and were involved in delivering this to carers and staff. This vision for the service is boosted by the evident enthusiasm of what is a new team.

**Support to the team** - A significant effort has been made to ensure that all staff are feeling like part of the fostering team and that new and inexperienced staff are nurtured in their roles so that their early experiences are positive and retention is more achievable. What was also evident was the encouragement given to staff to be innovative and to take responsibility for their own learning and for aspects of team development. We look forward to seeing how this 'improvement culture' among staff impacts on the service.

There are also two key areas for improvement:

**Impact of developments and improvements** - The last 18 months has been difficult for this service. There is a lot going on, a lot needing done and ideas/initiatives underdeveloped. In the absence of a full team and capacity to take forward developments and improvements, progress has undoubtedly been affected. From broader development plans and strategies to policies and guidance for staff, it was too early to tell how this was going to positively impact on outcomes and experiences for children, young people and carers.

It is also too early to tell that changes to the management structure and an improved presence of the board will have a sustained impact; ensuring that there is a period of relative staffing stability and where the level of support to carers returns to a more aspirational position.

**Turnover of staff** - There is a coherent strategy for staff retention and we would highlight this as probably one of the most important goals for the service over the next year. The re-shaping of the team has been a source of enthusiasm for the service but there is a need to bolster support to carers and the service should be concerned if there is not a period of relative stability. This would potentially have an impact on both sustaining care and support and meeting development and improvement goals.

### Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

### Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

Grade: 4 - good

## What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

### Previous requirements

There are no outstanding requirements.

## What the service has done to meet any recommendations we made at or since the last inspection

### Previous recommendations

There are no outstanding recommendations.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Enforcement

No enforcement action has been taken against this care service since the last inspection.

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings
18 Aug 2017	Announced (short notice)	<div>Care and support</div> <div>Environment</div> <div>Staffing</div> <div>Management and leadership</div> <div>5 - Very good</div> <div>Not assessed</div> <div>Not assessed</div> <div>5 - Very good</div>

Date	Type	Gradings
23 Apr 2015	Announced (short notice)	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good
14 Apr 2014	Announced	Care and support 4 - Good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 4 - Good
18 Apr 2013	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 5 - Very good Management and leadership 4 - Good
27 Jul 2012	Unannounced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 4 - Good
22 Oct 2010	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing Not assessed Management and leadership Not assessed
24 Nov 2009	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership Not assessed
12 Jan 2009	Announced	Care and support 5 - Very good Environment Not assessed Staffing 4 - Good Management and leadership 4 - Good

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