



## Inspection Report on

**The National Fostering Agency - Cymru**

**National Fostering Services  
Solva House  
Springmeadow Road Springmeadow Business Park  
Cardiff  
CF3 2ES**

## **Date Inspection Completed**

26/10/2023

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## About The National Fostering Agency - Cymru

Type of care provided	Fostering Service
Registered Provider	The National Fostering Agency Limited
Registered places	Not applicable
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	The service provides an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It anticipates, identifies and meets the Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use, the service.

### Summary

National Fostering Agency Wales clearly places children's well-being and safety at the centre of its service. Children experience good quality care from skilled, robustly recruited, trained foster carers who provide stability and responsive care to children's needs. Children's education and health needs are prioritised and a wide range of support is available to flexibly respond to particular issues as they arise.

Children have a say about their care and an empowering, rights-based approach ensures they are listened to and responded to in a safe manner.

Foster carers receive regular, reliable support from a team of enthusiastic, experienced and committed staff. They in turn are supported by a knowledgeable, approachable and visible management team. A culture of learning and aspiration is evident across the service.

The service is keen to develop its response to the Welsh Active Offer. Several staff and foster carers speak Welsh and a budget is allocated for the translation of certain documents into Welsh.

The governance and structure of the service is sound and there are clear lines of accountability and defined staff roles. Safer recruitment practices are followed and there are systems to ensure regular oversight of the service. Quality assurance measures are in place and the newly approved responsible individual (RI) is committed and taking action to ensure they fully meet regulations.

## Well-being

Children have information about their rights and entitlements and they make choices. They receive colourful, bilingual guides to the service and are regularly consulted in a variety of ways, both formally and informally. With the support of supervising social workers, they use the service's user-friendly app "My Youth Voice," to express their views about their care and support. Over time, this creates a valuable record of children's information, which tracks their progress to inform outcome planning. Children are consulted as part of foster carer's and their own reviews and they are regularly offered the opportunity to speak to supervising social workers on their visits. Some children participate in a youth ambassador scheme which influences service delivery, by for example, taking on board the group's ideas to support children to feel more welcome when they are first fostered.

Children are engaged in education and learning and are encouraged to develop to their potential. They are attending school or other education provisions which meet their particular needs and they are supported to be ambitious about their future. Foster carers value the training and support from the service's education advisor which gives them the confidence to advocate and challenge where necessary, to ensure children's educational needs are being met. In parent and baby placements, parents are supported to provide suitable stimulation which aids their baby's development. Foster carers work in partnership with schools to ensure trauma informed responses are supporting children to achieve their best outcomes.

The service ensures children are supported to be as healthy as they can be. Children are registered with primary health care agencies and they attend regular appointments as necessary. Children experience healthy lifestyles and are supported to adhere to structured routines and good personal hygiene habits. Foster carers are trained and encouraged to embed the therapeutic parenting model into their responses to children and they access clinical advice when needed.

Children do things that matter to them and have fun. Children see their families if this is consistent with their well-being and safety. Foster carers help them to positively prepare for time with their families are sensitive to the impact it may have on them. Children go to clubs and take part in activities such as gymnastics, cheer leading, walks on beaches and arts and crafts. They participate in the service's organised fun days at climbing centres and theme parks and join in with celebratory parties for Halloween and Christmas. Their cultural needs are respected; they are supported to attend their place of worship and to celebrate important dates in their religious calendar.

## Care and Support

The service provider considers a range of views and information to determine how foster carers and families can best meet the needs of children. Referral documentation from local authorities, including the child's care and support plan, is subject to the service's matching process. This involves discussions with team managers, supervising social workers and the foster carers themselves, who are able to request additional information from the local authority if needed. Foster carers we spoke to confirmed their views are taken into account during the matching process. An evidence and theory informed matching document and risk assessment is completed which informs decision-making. Impact assessments are carried out when required to ensure compatibility between children.

Planned transitions are not always possible as children often come to live with foster carers in emergency situations. Foster carers, however, ensure children and their parent, in the case of parent and baby placements, are made to feel welcome and accepted into the foster family. Foster carers told us they have the information to meet children's care and support needs but placement planning meeting documents were not on children's files.

Children are cared for by foster carers who understand their needs and are responsive to any emerging needs. All foster carers have completed training in the service's therapeutic parenting model and the translation of this into practice is assessed via regular oversight of their daily logs and discussions with their supervising social workers. They work in partnership with other agencies to address children's health needs to enable them to achieve more positive health outcomes. Children experience stability, warmth and affection and a positive sense of family life. The service has a range of measures which are used to support fragile fostering situations, these include access to clinical consultation, respite care and the use of support staff who can complete direct work. The service carries out reflective reviews of children whose placements have broken down to inform learning and improve practice.

Children experience well-being and a sense of achievement because they are able to access opportunities to learn, follow their interests and develop skills. The service's education advisor provides support, training and advice to foster carers which results in children achieving positive educational outcomes. Foster carers encourage children to participate in activities they enjoy which support their learning, health and overall development. Children's cultural needs are prioritised, they are listened to and supported to achieve their aims in a safe manner.

The service ensures children are safeguarded from harm and abuse. The manager and experienced team of supervising social workers understand their safeguarding duties and follow the service's safeguarding policy. Foster carers and staff are trained in safeguarding and other contemporary safeguarding issues. Children have regularly reviewed risk assessments and the service manager ensures notifications are made to CIW and referrals to safeguarding services as required. Allegations are responded to appropriately and in line with the service's policy and foster carers told us they felt supported throughout the process.

## **Environment**

The service has two offices; the inspection was based at the office in Cardiff.

The office premises are modern, spacious, accessible and safe. They provide a range of rooms which staff and foster carers can utilise for a variety of purposes. There are ample desks for supervising social workers and two large rooms with suitable technological links used for training and meetings. A smaller family room downstairs with kitchen facilities is used for activities with foster carers and children. The building is secure, the main front door is locked and we were asked to sign in and show our identification on arrival. The service provider ensures regular health and safety, fire safety checks and fire drills are undertaken and there is oversight and follow up to health and safety audits and fire risk assessments. All records are digital and the service has suitable safeguards and contingency planning in place to protect them.

Foster carer's homes are assessed when they are recruited to determine their suitability in safely and adequately meeting children's needs. Ongoing assessments of children's environments form part of the supervising social workers regular visits to foster carer's homes, both announced and unannounced. The initial health and safety assessment is updated annually as part of foster carer's reviews, along with any pet assessments. The service is able to utilise the expertise of their national health and safety advisor in relation to environmental issues.

Children and foster carers have the information they need. The statement of purpose is regularly updated and it reflects the service we saw at inspection. Two children's guides for different age groups are available in both Welsh and English; they are colourful, age appropriate and provide information about advocacy services and how to make a complaint. Foster carers have an A-Z guide to the service, and they can access the service's regularly reviewed policies and procedures, which are in line with Welsh legislation. Records show complaints are dealt with at the lowest level and are resolved satisfactorily.

The service recruits, assesses and trains foster carers to ensure they have the required value base, skills, experience, and resilience to meet children's needs. Prospective foster carers receive clear information and suitable training to prepare them for their fostering role. Panel records show suitable scrutiny of mostly comprehensive, analytical fostering assessments and annual reviews which informs their decision making. A further robust level of scrutiny is evident at agency decision maker level. Suitable training is provided to panel members and efforts are made to ensure the panel represents a diverse range of experience.

Foster carers receive ongoing training and support to ensure they are able to meet children's changing needs. Foster carers have easy access to the service's online training platform Shine, and those who struggle with technology are offered individual support to improve their skills. Following consultation, face to face training is returning for certain courses and foster carers told us they like having the mix of options. Records show almost all foster carers are trained in the mandatory courses and they are also accessing other relevant topics. Foster carers whose first language is Welsh are supported by Welsh speaking supervising social workers. Aside from the ongoing support foster carers receive from supervising social workers via monthly visits and regular phone calls, foster carers can access a range of other support options, including a buddy scheme, support groups, informal online groups and a reliable out of hours service. They told us they felt *"protected and supported by a consistent staff group."*

The staff files we viewed confirmed safer recruitment procedures are followed. The service is currently fully staffed and suitable checks are carried out when agency staff are used. Supervising social workers receive regular supervision and they told us, despite the wide geographical area covered and more recent hybrid work practices, they were a cohesive team who could call on each other for support when needed. They described a shared passion to promote the best outcomes possible for children. Records show supervising social workers are trained in all mandatory subjects and there is an ethos of learning and development within the service which encourages staff to stretch themselves and be ambitious. They told us they felt supported by experienced, approachable and visible managers.

Two highly valued support staff in the team provide a range of interventions to support children and foster carers. Their flexible, bespoke approach includes direct work with children to promote skills and activities, tailored technology support for foster carers, a mother and toddler group and the arrangement of activity days, award ceremonies and support groups.



There is strong leadership and management at the service and the staff team is supported through a clear line management structure. The regional manager is very experienced and visible and staff described them as “*knowledgeable, committed and approachable.*” The recently approved RI is engaging in meetings with foster carers and the staff team. They are enthusiastic and have a vision for the service. Both the regional manager and RI were responsive during the inspection and quickly addressed any minor points raised.

There are quality assurance processes in place which the regional manager and RI are addressing to ensure they fully meet regulations. The RI is recording their formal three-monthly visits to the service which include consultations with most of the required parties but require evidence of oversight of records. Quality of care reports, are addressing almost all of the regulatory areas and the most recent one was in the process of being completed. The content and structure of these reports requires review in order to provide a fuller picture of the service and the consultation and involvement of foster carers and children in its future development.

### Summary of Non-Compliance

Status	What each means
<b>New</b>	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
<b>Reviewed</b>	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
<b>Not Achieved</b>	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
<b>Achieved</b>	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people’s well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

### Priority Action Notice(s)

Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

### Area(s) for Improvement

Regulation	Summary	Status
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N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
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