



Inspection Report on

Red Kite Fostering Ltd

**1 The Meads
Kington
HR5 3DQ**

Date Inspection Completed

24/09/2021

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About Red Kite Fostering Ltd

| | |
|--|--|
| Type of care provided | Fostering Service |
| Registered Provider | Red Kite Fostering Ltd |
| Registered places | 9 approved foster carers (5 households) within Wales |
| Language of the service | English |
| Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection | First inspection since registration |
| Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer? | No |

Summary

Most children experience nurturing, stable placements; foster carers provide responsive care and support and promote their well-being. Children and younger adults living with foster carers at the time of our inspection had developed close relationships with their foster carers and were achieving positive outcomes. Children are encouraged and supported to follow healthy lifestyles, participate in education and explore their interests. They are able to express their views and exercise choice in their daily lives and they contribute to decision-making about their care and support. However, the service provider must ensure there are effective arrangements in place to obtain feedback from children about the service, the quality of care and support and any improvements required.

Systems in place to determine whether the service can meet the needs of children are not sufficiently robust. Careful matching is required, together with timely risk assessment and clear written guidance for foster carers to ensure children's needs can be met and to minimise the risk of placement breakdown. Additional training for foster carers, staff and fostering panel members is required to provide stable parent and child placements.

In general, staff and foster carers are safely recruited and supervision and support arrangements help staff and foster carers develop their knowledge and skills. However, training for staff and foster carers should be timely and sufficient to meet the needs of potential placements.

Arrangements in respect of the operation of the service, including oversight and governance are not robust. Improvement is needed to ensure the service meets legal requirements. Steps have been taken by the service provider to begin to address service shortfalls, and assurance has been provided to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) that parent and child placements will not be accepted until staff, foster carers and fostering panel members have completed relevant training and a review of the service is completed to ensure good practice can be followed.

Well-being

Children are encouraged to express their views, in relation to their day to day lives and within their care planning process. However, the service provider needs to strengthen formal consultation arrangements, to inform service provision and improvement. Children share their views about their day to day care in discussions with their social workers and their foster carers' supervising social worker during visits. They also comment on the care they receive in their children looked after (CLA) reviews and their contributions to foster carers' annual reviews. However, there is no evidence of the Responsible Individual engaging with children to gain their views or of their input into the service's quality of care review.

Information about the service in a format based on their age and understanding is available to children. The guide for younger children includes information about the type of care provided, their right, and who to talk to if they have worries or want to complain. Additional information relating to individual foster households is also provided for children, to try to allay children's anxieties as much as possible and help them settle in.

The well-being of children is promoted through the procedures in place to recruit and assess prospective foster carers. Enquiries to the service from prospective foster carers receive a prompt response, with a telephone call followed up by a visit, to discuss the realities of fostering, and an invitation to attend the service's skills to foster training. The assessment process for foster carers is generally robust, with the required checks undertaken and assessment reports well-presented. with reflective analysis and evidence based decision-making. On occasion where the quality of assessment report has fallen short of the expected standard, this had been appropriately identified as a quality assurance issue by the fostering panel and raised with the service.

Children are encouraged and supported to achieve their educational potential, their interests and to develop new skills. Foster carers encourage attendance at school; they have overseen home-schooling during periods of COVID-19 related school closures, liaised with school staff and encouraged children to complete homework tasks, in order to help children do their best, academically. Children are also able to follow their interests outside school and are introduced to new activities, to develop their skills, age appropriate independence and sense of achievement. In discussion, foster carers were clearly proud of the children's efforts and achievements.

The physical and emotional health of children within stable placements are effectively met by foster carers and the wider service. Medical consents are obtained to ensure health needs are met in a timely way. Foster carers ensure children are registered with a GP surgery, and are able to access a dentist and optician. They arrange for children to attend routine health appointments and seek medical attention when needed. Children are supported to be as healthy and active as possible, with foster carers paying attention to their dietary needs and exercise requirements. Children's emotional well-being is generally promoted, and records demonstrate that children have been able to build close, trusting relationships with their foster carers. However, careful matching is required to ensure children's needs can be met and to minimise the risk of placement breakdown.

Measures to safeguard children require improvement to ensure risks are effectively considered and managed by the service. Monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure children's home environment is safe. Foster carers are trained to manage challenging or risky behaviours and keep children safe, and most children experience safe, secure home lives. However, foster carers are not routinely provided with timely documentation relating to risk assessments and safer care arrangements to inform their practice. Safeguarding matters are managed appropriately by the service, though policies and procedures require amendment to ensure information is up to date and accurate.

Care and Support

When placed with foster carers who are able to meet their needs, children experience a nurturing, stable home environment, within which they are able to achieve positive outcomes. During our discussions with foster carers, they showed enthusiasm for their roles and evidenced a clear commitment to providing good quality care and support for the children living with them. On a day to day basis, foster carers promote healthy lifestyles, with records making reference to encouraging healthy eating and children attending activities designed to keep them fit. Education is valued and children are encouraged and supported to attend school. They also access leisure activities, which provide broader opportunities for learning and fun. Foster carers build trusting relationships, which allows children to talk about their experiences, feelings and any worries they may have and work with involved professionals to meet children's needs. In some cases, successful placements have enabled children to remain on a long-term basis with their foster carers, and on occasion beyond their eighteenth birthday under "when I'm ready" arrangements which has enabled them to develop attachments and enhanced their sense of belonging.

Some children are not appropriately placed; matching is not thorough and does not evidence sound decision making regarding the suitability of the service. Overall, written evidence of matching does not evidence a robust process. The placement of children (and children with parents) is frequently made on an emergency basis, despite fostering panel references to the need for careful matching and planned placements. There is no written record, prior to children being placed with foster carers, of the service provider's decision as to whether or not they can meet children's care and support needs. Reliance is overly placed on foster carers' decision as to whether to accept a new child or parent and child placement. Matching documentation is rarely completed prior to children being placed. Quality is poor; records do not demonstrate whether foster carers' skills, experience and training is sufficient to meet children's needs, or if additional training might be required, and if so, how this would be provided. The impact of the placement on the child, or any children already living in the household, the foster parents, including potential risks and how these might be managed is not well-evidenced. Poor matching has been a significant factor in respect of the breakdown of placements, resulting in further instability for children.

Children's safety is not fully assured as measures in place to identify and manage risk and to keep them safe are not sufficiently robust. However, where safeguarding issues have been raised, appropriate action has been taken by the service, in line with legislation.

Foster carers attend training on safeguarding, to equip them to understand and manage challenging or risky behaviours and enable them to keep children safe. This includes risk management and safer caring fostering. However, staff do not consistently complete risk assessment and management plans, at the time children or parent and child placements are made. Although generic safer care plans are created with foster carers, at the time of approval, they are not consistently updated to meet the needs of specific children, or parent and child placements. Where individualised plans are put in place, these are sometimes not completed for several weeks into the placement. Therefore, foster carers do not always have a clear picture of identified risk and the measures they should take to

address and minimise risk factors.

Documents made available for inspection included the service's safeguarding policy (reviewed August 2021) and the foster carers' handbook. Neither document refers to Welsh legislation or contains accurate information regarding safeguarding procedures in Wales. The foster carers' handbook does not provide clear guidance to foster carers on the steps they should take if they have a safeguarding concern. However, although we found documents to be inaccurate, or to lack detail, safeguarding procedures are appropriately followed by the service, when necessary. Records relating to complaints or allegations show them to be appropriately managed.

Environment

The office premises for the fostering service are suited to its purpose. Measures are in place to maintain people's health and safety when they are on the premises. As the office is sited in England, the service follows Public Health England guidance to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. However, the service should ensure that its policy and procedures for foster carers also refer to guidance issued by Public Health Wales and Welsh Government, which differs at times from that of Public Health England.

Arrangements are in place for the inspection and servicing of utilities and appliances, fire systems and safety equipment. An up-to date fire risk assessment is in place. We were advised by a recently appointed staff member that they had been informed about fire evacuation procedures. However, fire drills only take place on an annual basis. Drills should be undertaken as soon as possible following the arrival of new staff, to ensure they have a good understanding of, and an opportunity to practise the evacuation procedure. The service provider has up to date employer's liability insurance.

Information relating to young people and foster carers is securely held, within password protected electronic records, with individual access codes for staff. Staff files and any additional confidential documents are kept in locked cupboards. Rooms are available within the premises to provide private space for the supervision of staff. There are also additional meeting rooms, which can be used for meetings with professionals, or for training sessions.

Arrangements are in place to ensure children are cared for within safe environments, whilst living with their foster carers. However, refresher training for staff on health and safety should be arranged. The home environment of prospective foster carers is considered within the assessment process, with home safety checklists completed, and additional checks undertaken in relation to vehicles used and any pets within the home. Subsequent checks of fostering households are completed during announced and unannounced visits by their supervising social worker, and as part of their formal annual review process, to ensure that standards of health and safety remain satisfactory. However, COVID-19 restrictions have impacted on the frequency of both announced and unannounced visits. Action is taken where shortfalls are identified.

Leadership and Management

The service's statement of purpose provides information regarding the aim and objectives of the organisation. However, people cannot be clear about what the service sets out to provide as information about service provision and delivery lacks detail. In particular, it does not provide sufficient information regarding parent and child placement matching and admissions, safeguarding procedures, staff and foster carer training, panel arrangements or quality assurance arrangements. The document also refers to English legislation. The service's policies and procedures do not demonstrate a clear understanding by the service provider of Welsh legislation and associated guidance. Working practices within the service do not consistently accord with the service provider's statement of purpose, policies and procedures. Documentation requires review and amendment to ensure information is sufficient, accurate and informs practice.

Recruitment practice is generally sufficiently robust to ensure staff are suitable to work within the service. Action has been taken by the service provider to address gaps in staff files regarding employment history; reasons must be consistently recorded for all gaps in employment. Arrangements are in place to ensure ongoing disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks are completed at the required intervals. Staff who are required to register with Social Care Wales have done so. A conflict of interest policy has been recently developed, to provide transparency with regard to employment practices and to ensure effective working arrangements. However, the policy does not address potential conflict of interest in relation to fostering panel membership.

The range of training provided for staff does not fully equip them to meet the requirements of their role. Additional training is required, to effectively support foster carers and improve outcomes for children. New members of staff are provided with a formal induction to the service. Staff have completed training on safeguarding and on managing allegations. Additional role specific training has also been completed in relation to the assessment and supervision of foster carers. COVID-19 restrictions have clearly impacted on training opportunities, and the manager has led training sessions for staff during this period. However, staff have not completed the training they require to effectively support foster carers and to manage the range of specialised placements described within the service's statement of purpose.

The manager provides staff with regular, timely supervision; recent discussions have included the progress of children, case management and staff achievements together with learning and development needs. Practice areas requiring improvement are identified and clear action points agreed, though progress outcomes are not always clearly evidenced within supervision records. The manager provides informal guidance to staff on a day to day basis and monthly team meetings provide additional opportunities to share information and promote consistency in relation to working practices. At the time of our inspection twice-daily catch-up meetings were taking place to monitor and progress action being taken to address service shortfalls identified at a recent Ofsted inspection.

The Responsible Individual supervises the manager on a monthly basis – the focus is on the operation of the service; professional supervision has recently been sourced, but has not taken place, to date.

New foster carers receive an induction to the service, which includes completion of foster carer agreements, provision of their foster carer handbook and the day to day documentation they require to fulfil their role. They are also “buddied” with an experienced foster carer, who is able to provide additional support as they get used to their new role and responsibilities.

Foster carers attend a range of training, to aid their understanding of children’s needs and to develop the skills and knowledge they require to provide effective care and support. Mandatory training ensures foster carers have a good basic understanding of how to meet the needs of children who are likely to be placed with them. However, timescales for completion are unclear, and training pertinent to the needs of individual children or parent and children placements is not necessarily completed prior to children being placed with foster carers. Although the service’s statement of purpose outlines a more comprehensive training programme, we did not see evidence of foster carers having completed this additional training. Foster carers told us that the quality of training is good. Further training is required for foster carers, to ensure they are able to effectively manage the demands of providing parent and child placements. Positive action has recently been taken by the manager and Responsible Individual to better understand the individual training needs of foster carers. A staff member has completed an audit of training completed by foster carers, with individual learning needs identified, with a view to all foster carers having up to date personal development plans in place. This will benefit new foster carers as well as more experienced foster carers who have already completed their mandatory training.

The service’s supervision and support arrangements help foster carers to develop the knowledge and skills they require to meet children’s needs. However, the absence of good quality placement plans, risk assessments and safer care plans has impacted on foster carers ability to provide consistently effective care and support for children and parent and child placements. Most of the foster carers who spoke to us, commented very positively about the support provided by their supervising social worker and their experience of fostering with the wider service. Discussions have been held via online meetings when COVID-19 restrictions have impacted on home visits. Supervision records evidence reflective discussions and guidance in relation to the progress of children in placement, and action points are clearly recorded. Alongside formal supervision, family support staff maintain regular contact with foster carers and arrange additional support through foster carers’ group meetings. On call arrangements are in place. Action has recently been taken by the manager to audit records maintained by the service; additional information has been placed on file and documents for children currently living with foster carers, including risk assessments, have been revised to provide clearer guidance to foster carers.

In general, the fostering panel works effectively to fulfil its role in providing appropriate placements for children. However, panel documentation does not evidence robust scrutiny

and decision-making in respect of terms of approval relating to parent and child placements. The fostering panel is chaired by an independent person who has experience of fostering and wider social care. Consideration is given to the approval of prospective foster carers and the ongoing suitability of foster carers at their first annual review and subsequent reviews where foster carers have been subject to complaints or allegations.

Fostering panel meetings are quorate and panel members actively contribute to discussions and decision-making. Additional information is requested, if needed and the Fostering Panel Chair advised us that they had access to medical and legal advice. Action is taken to address occasional issues regarding the quality of assessments. Decision-making is generally consensual, though on occasion, majority recommendations are made. However, the minutes of panel meetings do not consistently provide sufficient detail regarding the rationale for recommendations. They do not fully reflect discussion and analysis of foster carers knowledge, experience and skills in respect of parent and child placements. At the time of recommending approval of foster carers for parent and child placements, panel members had not been provided with training on parent and child arrangements. Previous panel training has included sessions on values and ethics and additional training on panel membership and on parent & child arrangements has subsequently been booked. Apart from the fostering panel chair, annual appraisals of panel members have not been completed. Formal appraisals should be undertaken, to enable panel members to reflect on achievements and to inform training and development. Fostering panel's role in relation to quality assurance and service improvement requires review and written documentation, to ensure that the process is clear to all parties. We found some assessments and annual reviews to have been completed by fostering panel members, in their role as independent social workers. The arrangements to manage this potential conflict of interest are not clear and should be documented within the service's conflict of interest policy.

Quality assurance and governance systems are not effective in ensuring quality. Service shortfalls are not routinely identified and addressed in a timely manner by the service provider. Although the service's quality assurance and management policy references most of the relevant regulations, it does not provide any detail regarding the systems and processes in place to monitor, review and improve the quality of the service. Supervision records evidence discussions between the manager and staff about working practices, including any improvements required to improve service delivery and there is recent evidence of file audits of information relating to children and foster carers. The Responsible Individual's supervision of the registered manager considers the day to day operation of the service, including panel business and they attend team meetings. However, we found no evidence of a comprehensive system of oversight and governance.

Service failures identified at inspection demonstrate a lack of understanding on behalf of the Responsible Individual with regard to their role and responsibilities as described within legislation. The service has previously operated outside its terms of registration, though ceased to do so following discussion with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). The Responsible Individual is based at the service's main office, and therefore has general

oversight of the service on a day to day basis. However, there is no evidence of performance monitoring in accordance with legislation, to inform the quality of care review. The latest quality of care review and accompanying report (to April 2021) completed by the Responsible Individual does not evidence consultation with children, families, foster carers, staff employed by the service or placing authorities. It does not evidence any analysis of the aggregated data required by legislation or the outcome of any service audits. The report does not clearly identify areas where the service is doing well, and areas for improvement, nor make recommendations as to how the quality of the service could be improved. More positively, plans of action have since been drawn up following inspections by service regulators.

Summary of Non-Compliance

| Status | What each means |
|---------------------|---|
| New | This non-compliance was identified at this inspection. |
| Reviewed | 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. |
| Not Achieved | Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved. |
| Achieved | 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 |
|------------|--|--------|
| 11 | The service provider is not compliant with Regulation 11 of The Regulated Fostering Services (Services Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2019 | New |
| 3 | The service does not have robust arrangements in place to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. the service provider should review the service's statement of purpose and the operation of the home to ensure the service operates in accordance with legislation. | New |

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 |
| N/A | No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection | N/A |

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