

# Inspection report

## Carolina House Trust - Fostering Fostering Service

1 Stratheden Court  
Stratheden  
Cupar KY15 5SP

**Inspected by:** Linda Horsburgh  
**(Care Commission Officer)**

**Type of inspection:** Announced

**Inspection completed on:** 22 January 2009

**Service Number**

CS2004084075

**Service name**

Carolina House Trust - Fostering

**Service address**1 Stratheden Court  
Stratheden  
Cupar KY15 5SP**Provider Number**

SP2003001613

**Provider Name**

Carolina House Trust

**Inspected By**Linda Horsburgh  
Care Commission Officer**Inspection Type**

Announced

**Inspection Completed**

22 January 2009

**Period since last inspection****Local Office Address**Compass House  
Central East Region  
11 Riverside Drive  
Dundee  
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## **Introduction**

Carolina House Trust Fostering Service is provided by Carolina House Trust, a charitable organisation which provides a range of services to young people. The Fostering Service undertakes the recruitment, assessment, approval, training and ongoing support of carers to meet the identified needs of looked after children. The Service works in partnership with other agencies responsible for delivering services to "looked after children".

The service was registered with the Care Commission in December 2005.

Carolina House Trust had worked through a significant period of change during the past 12 months. The organisation had undertaken a review of its functions. All of its operational policies and procedures had been reviewed, in order to promote best practice and a professional framework from which to provide a quality service. This had resulted in the establishment of a dedicated fostering team, consisting of a manager, a senior practitioner, a part-time social worker, a placement support worker, and an admin officer.

Carolina House Trust mission statement is:

"Carolina House Trust provides the highest quality of care and standards of service to young people with complex needs. This care meets all regulations and exceeds national standards. The care will take place in a variety of settings that are tailored to meet individual need."

The fostering service primary aim is to "provide family placements as part of a continuum of care for vulnerable young people."

Two new foster carer applicants had been assessed and approved between January and December 2007. There were 13 children and young people in placement with 7 approved carers, and 2 respite carers, at the time of the inspection. Four new applicants were in the process of being assessed.

Based on the findings of this inspection the service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good

Quality of Staffing - 4 - Good

Quality of Management and Leadership - 4 - Good

This inspection report and grades represent the Care Commission's 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. Please refer to the care services register on the Care Commission's website ([www.carecommission.com](http://www.carecommission.com)) for the most up-to-date grades for this service.

## **Basis of Report**

This report was written following an announced inspection which took place over two weeks beginning on the 12th of January 2009. Two Care Commission Officers conducted the inspection.

Before the Inspection

The Annual Return

The service completed an annual return as requested by the Care Commission.

#### The Self-Assessment Form

The service submitted a self-evaluation form as requested by the Care Commission.

#### Regulation Support Assessment

The inspection plan for this service was decided after a Regulation Support Assessment (RSA) was carried out to determine the intensity of inspection necessary. The RSA is an assessment undertaken by the Care Commission Officer (CCO) which considers complaints activity, changes in the provision of the service, nature of notifications made to the Care Commission by the service (such as absence of a manager) and action taken upon requirements. The CCO will also have considered how the service responded to situations and issues as part of the RSA.

#### LOW

This assessment resulted in this service receiving a low RSA score and so a low intensity inspection was required. The inspection was based on the relevant Inspection Focus Areas and associated National Care Standards, recommendations and requirements from previous inspections and complaints or other regulatory activity.

During the inspection process

#### Staff at inspection

The inspection was carried out by Linda Horsburgh and Lisa Kirkbride, Care Commission Officers. At the end of the inspection, the lead Officer gave feedback to the manager.

#### Evidence

During the inspection visit, the following documents and records were examined:

- service users files.
- relevant policies and procedures
- information leaflets provided to service users.
- minutes of meetings
- feedback from service users
- feedback about the quality of placements
- governance report

Discussion took place with stakeholders and service users, including:

- the manager
- the staff team
- relevant headquarters staff
- three foster families
- three foster children
- three local authority social workers

#### Inspection Focus Areas and links to Quality Themes and Statements for 2008/09

Details of the inspection focus and associated Quality Themes to be used in inspecting each type of care service in 2008/09 and supporting inspection guidance, can be found at:  
<http://www.carecommission.com/>

#### Fire Safety Issues

The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 introduced new regulatory arrangements in respect of fire safety, on 1 October 2006. In terms of those arrangements, responsibility for enforcing the

statutory provisions in relation to fire safety now lies with the Fire and Rescue service for the area in which a care service is located. Accordingly, the Care Commission will no longer report on matters of fire safety as part of its regulatory function, but, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, will alert the relevant Fire and Rescue service to their existence in order that it may act as it considers appropriate. Further advice on your responsibilities is available at [www.infoscotland.com/firelaw](http://www.infoscotland.com/firelaw)

### **Action taken on requirements since last Inspection**

At the last inspection 8 requirements were made, and of these, 7 were met and 1 was carried forward. In addition 2 of the requirements have some elements, which will be carried forward into recommendations.

1. The provider must ensure that suitable care planning takes place for all young people using the service. This should include:

" ensuring that a suitable referral process is followed

" ensuring that referral information is recorded

" ensuring that a care plan is in place within one month of the placement commencing and is regularly reviewed.

This is to comply with SSI 2002/114 as amended, regulation 5 (1A) personal plans.

Timescale for implementation: Within one month of receipt of report.

This requirement has been met.

2. The provider should ensure that procedures are in place to audit the information provided in relation to children placed with Carolina House Trust. The provider should ensure that where relevant information has not been provided action is taken to follow this up and ensure that children and young people's care needs are met.

This is to comply with SSI 2002/114 as amended, regulation 4 (1) (a) welfare of users.

Audit tools have been developed, and it was reported that these will be operational by the end of January 2009. This requirement will be met, when the audit tools are operational.

3. The provider should carry out personal risk assessments for young people in foster placement, and should review and update risk assessments of living arrangements when there are changes to the household composition.

This is in order to comply with: SSI 2002/114 as amended Regulation 4(1) (a) Welfare of service users.

There was evidence that personal risk factors had been fully assessed and recorded. This requirement has been met.

4. The Provider must ensure that arrangements to have a child live, even temporarily, away from an approved foster carer's home, or for someone else temporarily to take care of the child, must be recorded in the Foster Placement Agreement made with the foster carer.

This is in order to comply with The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996, regulation 7 (1), regulation 8 and regulation 12, Schedule 3, paragraph 4.

Records and interviews confirmed that all respite placements had been with approved foster carers. This requirement has been met.

5. The service should ensure that the certificate of registration is displayed on the premises.

This is in order to comply with: Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, section 9 (4).

The certificate of registration was displayed on the premises. This requirement has been met.

6. Record keeping should be standardised across the service. Action should be taken to address the following issues:

- the quality of case recording should be improved
- case recordings in relation to children should be recorded in the children's files
- all significant information and contacts should be recorded
- The provider should ensure that clear records are maintained in relation to child protection issues.

This is to comply with SSI 2002/114. Regulation 4 (1) (a) welfare of users

This requirement had been outstanding from a previous report. Record keeping had been significantly improved. The requirement was considered as being met overall, with some minor suggestions carried forward into a recommendation at the end of the report.

7. There should be robust systems in place for recording information about incidents and accidents, notifications and absconding.

This is to comply with SSI 2002/114 19(3) records and 21, notifications.

This requirement had been outstanding from a previous report.

The fostering service had in place, appropriate systems for recording information about incidents, accidents, notifications and absconding, and had used these appropriately. This requirement has been met. However, the Board had failed to notify changes of membership -- see new Requirement 2 in the report.

8. The Service should ensure that the views of the placing social worker and relevant local authorities are always obtained for the review.

This is to comply with The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 Regulation 10 (2)

This requirement had been outstanding from a previous report. The service had put in place systems for seeking, and chasing up the views of placing social workers. However records showed that the views of the placing local authority were not available in all cases.

As this practice could also contribute significantly to service user participation, this will be carried forward into a recommendation. (See recommendation 1)

### **Comments on Self Assessment**

The service submitted a self-evaluation form as requested by the Care Commission. This acknowledged the amount of work undertaken and ongoing, to review the organisation functions and practices and those of the fostering service. Good progress had been made since the previous inspection, in establishing and implementing a participation strategy.

### **View of Service Users**

Three foster carers and three children/young people were interviewed as part of the inspection. Overall they stated that they received a very good service from Carolina House

Trust. Their comments are included in the body of the report. One young person (at the request of the Care Commission Officer) provided two drawings to describe what it was like being in foster care.

Care Commission Officers did not speak directly with relatives as part of the inspection. Processes for considering, recording and responding to the views of birth parents, were examined.

## **View of Carers**

## Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

### Overall CCO Theme Grading: 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

Formal and informal opportunities for participation in the evaluation and improvement of the service had been established and were at varying stages of progression.

A well written participation strategy had been developed, and there was a communication group which met on a regular basis to promote good information sharing and consultation. The aim of the service was to have participation embedded in all areas of practice. Participation which had previously been mainly verbal and implicit was now more explicit. For example, minutes were kept of views expressed.

A range of evidence was sampled showing there were various opportunities where service users had been asked their opinions about the quality of the service provided and where improvement action had been implemented. This approach resulted in positive outcomes for children and young people and for foster carers.

Foster Carers interviewed confirmed that they were consulted regarding various aspects of the service. Questionnaires, developed by the service, had been sent to all 9 foster carers and 7 had been returned. These responses evidenced positive service user feedback about the care and support provided; the professionalism of the staff and that they (foster carers) felt consulted.

Foster carers commented, "communication is very good -- we are always kept up to date with new developments such as the Foster Carer Handbook and the contracts. We know what is happening within the organisation and have ongoing opportunities to make comment."

"If there are any problems there is always somebody on the phone - they are supporting me and motivating me to do further study - I've had a good service with them since 2003 - they have tried to involve us in relation to the website -- in participation days."

"My social worker is always full of ideas and getting us involved - I'm glad all the changes happened and we are going back to the original nucleus "

"The managers are all approachable -- we have good relationships with all the staff"

Two foster carers were asked how they would grade the quality of the service, using the Care Commission grades of 1 to 6. They replied "5 and 6".

There was evidence that the views of children and young people were considered on an ongoing basis, through meetings with the placement support worker and at reviews. Personal plans included a paragraph in bold, reminding young people that they could change anything in the report, which they felt was not accurate, or which they wanted to add.

A young person interviewed said: "before Christmas, we got asked to give our ideas -- I couldn't think of anything -- we went go-karting -- in the summer I went boating. I agreed to go -- I like going on the boat - enjoyable!" Another young person had never spoken to Carolina House Trust, staff, but had participated in a group with other young people. She reported liking her placement, and if asked to grade the fostering service, she would give it a 6.

One young person provided two drawings showing what it was like to be in foster care. The drawings showed a house, a bed, and a computer, with the young person in the centre with a big smile on his face.

In response to the expressed views of a young person, the service had implemented changes by adding to, and enhancing its (soon to be launched) logo and website.

The service worked with a number of local authority professionals, who gave positive feedback about the service provided. One social worker described the service from Carolina House Trust as being "excellent." The referral process resulted in a very well planned transition". It was stated that the young person was fully involved in all the decisions and was able to visit both the foster carers and the local school prior to moving. "The entire foster family had been involved in making the young person feel welcome". The fostering service was well regarded, ensuring the safety and well being of the young person. "All aspects of the placement were well considered and well planned". The social worker felt that Carolina House Trust, had good procedures in place to support their carers.

Two local authority social workers reported that the foster carers were excellent at meeting children's needs, for example, supporting family contact, health, education and emotional needs.

Having considered the evidence provided, opportunities for participation in improving care and support were seen to be very good, with clear plans for ongoing improvement.

### **Areas for Development**

Although service users were clearly consulted and information was shared, some interviewees were less clear about the participation process itself. Some had to be prompted to realise that they had been consulted. The service had identified the need to publicise their participation strategy for carers, young people and other stakeholders. They planned to utilise the new website, and in future possibly MP3 format and graphics in order to be user-friendly. Consideration could be given as to how the new website might facilitate contributions from young people for reviews.

The views of young people, birth parents and their social workers, although requested, were not always available at the foster carer review. (See recommendation 1).

The participation forum, consisting of staff representation from all services, would have benefited from service user representation at its inception. However this was planned as the next stage of development.

The recording of views and suggestions, although progressing well, was not yet embedded in practice. The service planned to develop its collating, statistical analysis and methods of feeding back information. (See recommendation 2)

### **CCO Grading**

5 - Very Good

### **Number of Requirements**

0

## **Number of Recommendations**

2

**Statement 3: We ensure that service user's health and wellbeing needs are met.**

### **Service Strengths**

Good systems were in place to ensure the health and well being of service users. Records and respondents confirmed that the approval process for foster carers ensured that any health needs (of carers) were fully considered prior to approval.

Interviews and documentation confirmed that the three young people considered during the inspection, had a health record, and that each one was registered with a GP and had access to dental treatment. Some children placed were visited by a specialist "Looked After and Accommodated Children's" nurse (LAC Nurse). This depended on which local authority had responsibility for the placement and whether young people agreed. Where children did not have access to this service, the responsibility for promoting health and well being, was seen to be shared between the child's social worker and the foster carers, supported by Carolina House Trust.

Children's education needs were careful consideration. The fostering service was actively considering how best to access the services of an education professional.

Children's files confirmed that risk assessments had been carried out prior to placement, which considered the match between the carer and the child. The effective procedures being used, ensured good outcomes for children and young people.

The service had a non smoking policy and healthy eating policy, which promoted the well being of children and young people.

#### **Inspection Focus Area -- Child Protection**

Children and young people were looked after by carers, who were aware of safe caring practices, and of the policy in relation to child protection. Foster carers interviewed confirmed this was discussed at the pre approval training, and they were very aware of the responsibilities in respect of child protection and safe caring. Service users had been given leaflets on the Children's Charter.

Records confirmed that the service had acted appropriately, when child protection issues had been identified.

Having considered all the evidence provided, this statement was found to be very good

### **Areas for Development**

Although foster carers were knowledgeable about child protection issues, and had been given copies of the Children's Charter not all carer's were aware of the Framework Standards for Child Protection. (See recommendation 3)

The service had identified the need to monitor the quality of case recording. There had been significant improvements to record keeping systems since the last inspection. Information in children's files was well segregated and labelled. From the files sampled, it was noted that

children's views could have been better recorded, LAC review minutes had signatures and dates pending. Although some of the files were reported to have been audited, it was not clear from examining the files which ones had been scrutinised. (See recommendation 4)

**CCO Grading**

5 - Very Good

**Number of Requirements**

0

**Number of Recommendations**

2

**Quality Theme 2: Quality of Environment**

**Overall CCO Theme Grading:**

## **Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing**

### **Overall CCO Theme Grading: 4 - Good**

**Statement 1: We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.**

#### **Service Strengths**

Service users had the opportunity to make comment on the quality of staffing, through the recent questionnaires issued. Other positive comments made about the service as a whole (as reported in 1.1), included the staffing.

During the previous 12 months, Carolina House Trust had undergone an extensive restructuring of staffing. As part of this the views of staff and of service users had been considered. Young people had commented on the lack of continuity, due to the number of sessional workers employed in the Organisation. One Foster Carer interviewed also spoke of, "too many staff coming and going (in the past)". These views contributed to the decision to establish a dedicated fostering team in May 2008, consisting of permanent staff. Interviewees confirmed that this was a positive outcome for them, in supporting continuity of care and good practice.

There was evidence of established foster carers being asked to contribute to training of new carers. There was historically, a good range of training provided to staff. Currently, a review had taken place of training offered and appropriate programmes identified for different categories of staff.

Foster carers commented very favourably on the support they received from staff, through regular visits, meetings and phone calls. Interviewees advised that the staff were very professional in their work, as well as being approachable. Good relationships were reported between staff, carers and young people.

As the participation strategy was newly established and systematically progressing, this statement was seen at this stage, to be good.

#### **Areas for Development**

The service was actively considering appropriate ways of involving service users in the recruitment and selection process. Careful thought was being given to how this could be achieved in a meaningful way.

The service was aware that it needed to continue to develop more robust systems for capturing the views of young people, birth parents and other stakeholders with regard to the quality of staffing; and to communicate how these translated into action for improvement of the service.

Interviewees made very positive comments about the quality of staff. However, they were less clear about the task of evaluating and assessing this quality. (See recommendation 5)

#### **CCO Grading**

4 - Good

## **Number of Requirements**

0

## **Number of Recommendations**

1

**Statement 3: We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.**

## **Service Strengths**

Service users received a very good quality service delivered by an appropriately qualified and experienced workforce.

The fostering team was supported by a knowledgeable and experienced manager. Staff demonstrated a very good understanding of the relevant legislation, good practice guidance and relevant benchmarks, and were taking account of the National Care Standards to good advantage.

There were productive professional links with neighbouring local authorities, and with national organisations such as Fostering Network and BAAF. Where foster care assessments had been commissioned, appropriate checks had been carried out to ensure that staff were appropriately qualified and vetted professionals. Records confirmed that all relevant staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council, and were aware of the Codes of Practice.

One foster carer commented:

"Staff are really good and do their job well. They are all very professional."

The training programme had been recently reviewed to ensure that it was fit for purpose. Training needs were identified through the supervision and appraisal processes.

Having considered all of the evidence presented, this statement was seen to be very good.

## **Areas for Development**

The service was in the process of matching appropriate training to the new staff team. Bi-monthly Practice Development Sessions were planned to share good practice and keep staff up to date with national developments.

## **CCO Grading**

5 - Very Good

## **Number of Requirements**

0

## **Number of Recommendations**



## **Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership**

**Overall CCO Theme Grading: 4 - 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**

As with statement 1.1, there were a range of opportunities for service users to express their views. Interviewees and documentation confirmed that the management team were approachable and listened to the views of service users.

Questionnaires had been sent to all 9 foster carers and 7 had been returned. The responses evidenced positive service user feedback about the support provided; the professionalism of the staff and that foster carers felt listened to. The letter accompanying the questionnaires, stated that the responses would contribute to the self-assessment submitted to the Care Commission.

The decision to have a separately managed fostering team was made, taking account of various factors, including staff and service user views. Involving service users in assessing and evaluating quality of management and leadership was at an early stage.

Taking into account the evidence sampled this statement was seen as good.

### **Areas for Development**

Although a good start has been made in establishing and implementing the participation strategy, service users had little explicit involvement in assessing and evaluating the quality of management. (See recommendation 5)

### **CCO Grading**

4 - 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**

An evaluation and restructuring of the organisation had taken place over the past 12 months and was nearing completion. There was good evidence that Governance of the organisation as a whole, and of the fostering service, had been revisited, and responsibilities more clearly identified.

As previously stated in the report there were a variety of opportunities for service users to give feedback about the service, leading to improvements.

There was good evidence that relevant legislation and National Care Standards were embedded in the policies and procedures and were being actively considered to inform practice.

The Organisation had identified the need to have a robust Quality Assurance Framework and was in the process of appointing a Quality Assurance manager. Audit tools were in the process of being developed.

Having considered the evidence provided this statement was seen to be good and still developing.

### **Areas for Development**

Involving service users in evaluation of the service was at an early stage. The fostering service had identified relevant internal and external quality indicators. Staff were aware that they needed to develop more robust systems for eliciting the views of all stakeholders, and using these for improvement.

Information in children's files was well organised, but it was not clear, which files had been audited. The Organisation was currently in the process of developing its audit tools.

Although the recently produced Governance report highlighted the requirement to comply with Care Commission regulations, the Board had omitted to notify the changes to its membership. (See requirement 1)

### **CCO Grading**

4 - Good

### **Number of Requirements**

1

### **Number of Recommendations**

0

**Regulations / Principles**

**National Care Standards**

## **Enforcement**

There has been no enforcement action against this service since the last inspection.

## **Other Information**

13 recommendations had been made at the last inspection. The service had made good progress on all of the recommendations, resulting in continuous improvement being actioned and on-going.

## **Requirements**

1. The Provider must ensure that all changes of Board members are notified to the Care Commission. This is in order to comply with SSI 2002/114 Regulation 23 (1) -- notice of changes.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Provider must continue to robustly seek the views of the placing social worker and relevant local authorities for a foster carer review. National Care Standards Foster Care and Family Placement Services - standard 11.5 and standard 13.7.
2. The service now needs to ensure that the collated views of service users are well recorded, showing the action which has been taken, and how this was communicated back to participants. National Care Standards Foster Care and Family Placement Services - standard 11.5 and standard 13.6.
3. The service should ensure that all foster carers are aware of the Framework Standards for Child Protection. National Care Standards Foster Care and Family Placement Services - standard 7.3.
4. The service should continue to develop effective recording and information systems. National Care Standards Foster Carer and Family Placement Services -- standard 13.6.
5. The service should ensure that service users have meaningful involvement in the assessment and evaluation processes. National Care Standards Foster Carer and Family Placement Services -- standard 13.7.

**Linda Horsburgh**  
**Care Commission Officer**