

Fostering People Too Limited

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Inspector	Joe Staines
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Address	Braintree Enterprise Centre 46 Springwood Drive Braintree Essex cm7 2yn
Telephone number	01376 329 460
Email	peter@fosteringpeopletoo.org.uk
Registered person	Fostering People Too Limited
Registered manager	Peter John Russell Turner
Responsible individual	Bridget Betts
Date of last inspection	7 August 2006

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Fostering People Too was first registered in September 2005. The agency recruits and supports foster carers in Essex, Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Middlesex and North and East London. At the time of the inspection, the agency was supporting approved foster carers in 11 households, with 13 young people in placements. The agency was staffed by two of the three Directors (one of whom was the Registered Manager) and a part-time social worker and employed an administrator, as and when necessary. The third director also takes a direct role in providing training for carers. An independent reviewing officer is employed to undertake all carers' annual reviews, all of which currently go to panel for review. The agency occupies premises on the outskirts of Braintree, with easy access from the A120. The small office is situated in a local business centre and has access to meeting rooms and other shared facilities. Ample car parking is available.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection covering all of the key National Minimum Standards. This is an outstanding agency with positive practices and good outcomes achieved for children and young people. During the inspection carers and young people expressed unanimous praise for the agency in respect of carers and for the carers by young people. Excellent records are maintained in respect of carers along with any children and young people in placement, identifying their progress and developing needs. The support provided by the agency to its carers was consistently highlighted as a positive, both in terms of its quality and consistency.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

This agency was last inspected in August 2006. This inspection confirmed that all of the required actions have been undertaken.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The agency has a clear written health care policy, covering a wide range of areas. Children's health needs are known on referral to the agency, or at the time of placement as part of the planning process. Carers are provided with extra training if required, by trained medical staff from community health services, in order to meet any complex medical needs of children placed with the agency. An example of this was the training provided to carers by the Addenbrooks and Great Ormond Street hospitals in relation to specialist health care needs. Good records are maintained by carers of health appointments made and attended. Although first aid training had not been routinely provided, the agency has negotiated with an external provider to train all carers with dates agreed. Carers are aware of, and comply with the agency's policy of ensuring that all children are registered with a doctor and dentist. Good records are produced prior to each review of children placed with carers, providing information about the health needs and progress of the child concerned.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are protected from abuse by the agency through a combination of robust recruitment and selection of staff who work with vulnerable children, and a range of policies and procedures aimed at securing appropriate levels of safety for children. Children are matched with carers who have the skills and experience to meet their identified needs. Carers are trained in, and guided through the process for responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse, and the manager is involved in all stages of the management and response to allegations. Foster carer guidelines give carers clear information about the process to follow when a child goes missing from home. Carers are also clear about the issue of bullying, with clear guidance and advice also contained within the foster carer's handbook. None of the children who responded to the survey undertaken by Ofsted reported that they were being bullied. The agency ensures all foster carers and social work staff are subject to a thorough vetting process when being recruited, including criminal records checks, references, full employment histories and records of interview. The panel operated by this agency has been fully trained and is provided with clear procedural guidance about its purpose and function. All members are subject to criminal records bureau checks, and are provided with information, relevant to the task, when it becomes available. The panel provides feedback on individual assessments of prospective foster carers, and to managers of the agency in quarterly business meetings. The panel make up fails to comply with all the relevant regulations in that it does not, at present, contain an independent member who is or was a foster parent for a fostering service provider other than the one whose fostering panel is being established.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children with diverse needs, for example, as a result of having dual heritage or a disability are supported by carers who are appropriately matched and receive training in valuing diversity. The agency has a clear policy, showing a commitment to tackling issues arising from diversity issues. Children receive excellent support from the agency in relation to their educational needs. Carers regularly attend meetings at schools and after school clubs. Attendance levels of children placed within the agency are high, and no children have been excluded since being placed with the agency's carers.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children placed with the agency have their contact needs assessed prior to, or as soon as possible after being placed, and children report that these needs are met. Carers are provided with training and clear guidance in promoting contact, backed up by training on the subject. Children can expect to be listened to by carers who are made aware of the importance of listening to children. Children are provided with additional information about who they can contact if they feel their views are not being listened to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

The standards in this section were not assessed at this inspection.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The agency's statement of purpose is fully reflective of the aims and objectives of Fostering People Too Limited. The management of the agency is conducted by three experienced and qualified members of staff, all of whom maintain a 'hands on' approach as confirmed by carers during the inspection. Questionnaire responses were received from four young people and five foster carers. All questionnaires contained very positive comments about the agency's practices and the care provided by its foster carers: 'We have been very pleased with the support we have been given, including being accompanied to meetings, and discussion of each aspect of care as it has come up'. 'Excellent and experienced social work support'. 'Excellent communication and reliability'. 'Very supportive and great advocates for all children'. Young people made no negative comments about the care they received, and confirmed that they feel safe. Personnel files and discussions with staff evidence a good level of formal support, supervision and appraisal and staff spoke highly of informal support systems, saying that managers operated an 'open door' policy, and of training opportunities provided by the agency. There is a good level of competent administrative support. The agency has clear policies and procedures for the recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers. The carers' handbook includes good guidance for carers on placement recording. Standardised forms have been developed for the carer review process are particularly good and link well with the carer competencies identified in the National Minimum Standards. Review reports for children's reviews are also detailed and provide a good picture of the progress and development of the child in question. All foster carers are reviewed annually by an independent reviewing officer whose recommendations are presented to the Agency decision maker or, if there are changes to approval status, to the fostering panel.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
30	ensure that the fostering panel includes in it's membership, at least one person who is, or within the previous two years has been, a foster parent for a fostering service provider other than the one whose fostering panel is being established [Regulation 24 (3) (d)]	8 February 2008

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for independent fostering agency

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes the health and development of children (NMS 12)

Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable (NMS 3)
- the fostering service provides suitable foster carers (NMS 6)
- the service matches children to carers appropriately (NMS 8)
- the fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect (NMS 9)
- the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people (NMS 15)
- fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively (NMS 30)

Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service values diversity (NMS 7)
- the fostering service promotes educational achievement (NMS 13)
- when foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child (NMS 31)

Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person (NMS 10)
- the fostering service promotes consultation (NMS 11)

Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service prepares young people for adulthood (NMS 14)
- the fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified (NMS 29)

Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- the fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience (NMS 2)
- the fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 4)

Annex A

- the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 5)
- staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 16)
- the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff (NMS 17)
- the fostering service is a fair and competent employer (NMS 18)
- there is a good quality training programme (NMS 19)
- all staff are properly accountable and supported (NMS 20)
- the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers (NMS 21)
- foster carers are provided with supervision and support (NMS 22)
- foster carers are appropriately trained (NMS 23)
- case records for children are comprehensive (NMS 24)
- the administrative records are maintained as required (NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose (NMS 26)
- the fostering service is financially viable (NMS 27)
- the fostering service has robust financial processes (NMS 28)
- local authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.