

Chrysalis Care Ltd

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Inspector	Alex Turner
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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

Chrysalis Care is an independent fostering agency that recruits, trains and supports foster carers in Kent, Essex, Luton and the London area. The fostering provision is complimented by a Children's Services team which can provide individualised support and therapeutic intervention for children placed through the service.

Summary

The inspection was announced and conducted over the course of three and a half days. All of the key National Minimum Standards for fostering were rated. The service is professionally carried on, it is child centred, and engages in a process of quality assurance and improvement.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two recommendations included in the last inspection report. Both relate to the supervision and appraisal for staff. Action has been taken to address the shortfalls identified.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health and development is promoted. Children's health care needs are considered at the point of referral and matching. Children are supported to access routine and specialist health care services. Training, support and guidance for children and foster carers covers health. The service is working to improve the standard and transferability of children's health care records. Assessment and time limited intervention by qualified children's therapists are included in the services provided.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The persons carrying on and managing the service are suitable to do so. The service offers placements with foster carers whose homes are in keeping with the task. Suitability is ascertained at the point of prospective carers' initial assessment and then if approved through regular supervision visits and their annual review. Children are placed with foster carers that have been carefully matched in terms of what they can offer to address children's specific needs and circumstances. Placement stability has improved for the third consecutive year. Carers describe a process of information sharing and involvement in placement decisions. Where circumstances permit planned introductions are arranged. Documentation of the matching process is largely unformatted and lacking in immediate clarity. Children are protected from abuse and neglect. Foster carers' training, supervision and guidance covers safety issues and promoting children's self esteem. Principles of safe care are carefully considered. Foster families develop safe care policies particular to their own circumstances though only in some cases to those of children that have been placed. Records of allegations and complaints indicate the process to deal with these is professional and thorough. Foster carers have a good awareness of issues around staying safe including bullying and the procedures for use if a foster child is missing from the home. Children are protected by suitability checks carried out on people employed to work for

the purposes of the fostering service. Written procedures are in line with good practice. The rigor of these checks varied. Checks carried out on panel members and sessional staff were not to the same good standard as for those carried out for regular team members. The panel add to the safeguards in place to ensure people approved to foster are suitable to do so. Panel membership includes people from a range of backgrounds with experience and or qualifications in line with carrying out panel functions. The impartiality of the panel was potentially compromised by the apparent duality in roles of one of its members. Panel membership has since been reviewed. Panel administration is good though not without error. Panel papers are normally circulated a week prior to the event meaning time to make and follow up any enquiries before cases are presented is somewhat limited. Quality assurance of the panels operation is not fully established.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The fostering service values diversity and promotes equality. Clear equal opportunities policy informs the overall practice and operation of the service. Training, supervision and guidance covers these topics. The matching process seeks to take into account children's heritage, background, individual circumstances and interests. Direct work with children includes activities to enhance their confidence and feeling of self-worth. Children's education is given a high priority by the service and their foster carers. Foster carers routinely engage with schools in line with supporting children's progress and development. Arrangements are made for the provision of additional tuition as required. Children's services include the provision of qualified teaching support. Foster carers take an active part in finding suitable schools for children. Children's surveys indicate many feel well supported by their foster carers to get on at school and do well. Children having short term breaks receive the same level of provision as other placements. The planning involved in making these placements is as detailed and child focussed as the circumstances allow. There are no specific policies informing practice to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children are encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendship. The matching process seeks to take into account the need for and benefits of appropriate contact for children when finding/suggesting a suitable foster carer. The assessment and training of carers covers the importance of foster carers helping a child to maintain appropriate contacts and covers the skills required to encourage and facilitate such contacts. Foster carers demonstrate tenacity and commitment in supporting some of the arrangements that have been made. Children's views are listened to and acted upon. The fostering service provides some excellent opportunities for children to come together and share their views. Inspection surveys indicate that most children feel that they are usually or always listened to by the foster carers and social workers. Children's views are formally sought during foster carers' annual reviews and during their own care and education reviews. Children are able to make complaints and to have these treated seriously.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The foster care services help young people to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living. Foster carers know what is expected in terms of their role in helping prepare children and young people for independent or semi-independent living. Training, support and guidance covers this area. Young people preparing to move to independent or semi-independent living are consulted about her/his future and encouraged to be actively involved in decision making processes and implementation of the Pathway Plan.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Chrysalis Care have a statement of purpose that sets out what services are provided for children. The children's guide includes a summary of this and on how a child can secure access to an independent advocate and about how to complain. The guide is not particularly suitable for young children. Policies, procedures and written guidance to staff and carers accurately reflect the statement of purpose. Staff are organised and managed in a way which delivers an efficient and effective foster care service. The management structure incorporates clear lines of accountability. Social work tasks are defined and in the main delegated appropriately for the skills, qualifications and experience of the relevant members of staff. Supervision and support provided by student social workers was not adequately supplemented with supervision visits from a qualified social worker. Workloads are determined, prioritised and monitored closely. Assessments, approvals and reviews are managed and implemented effectively. Training and appropriate professional and skills development is very well organised. The fostering service social workers and the children's social workers work effectively together. Children are placed with foster carers who are well supported by Chrysalis. Regular contact, supervision and monitoring visits, out of hours help and guidance, a comprehensive fostering manual and membership to fostering organisations are all included in the back up provided. Training and support groups are regular, and are responsive to carers' needs. A comprehensive case record is maintained for each child which details the nature and quality of care provided. The purpose, format and contents of files is clearly established. When a child leaves the foster care placement, the agency sends all relevant records to the responsible authority. Foster carers state the service is very good at obtaining and passing on information to them. Carers store information in a secure manner and understand what information they are expected to keep and what information needs to be passed on to the fostering service. Administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the service and as required by regulations. There is a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of records, and remedial action is taken when necessary. Confidential records are stored securely. There is a permanent, private, secure record for each foster carer appointed by the organisation. Records about allegations and complaints are clearly recorded and include details of any investigation, conclusion reached and action taken.

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
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15	follow clear procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff/foster carers to ensure children are protected (Regulation 20).	11 January 2008
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Recommendations

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

- review the system used to record and otherwise evidence the matching process (NMS 8).
- ensure foster carers' safe caring policy is cleared with children's social workers and explained clearly and appropriately to children (NMS 9).
- ensure that panel papers are circulated giving time enough for follow up enquiries to be resolved prior to presentation of carers to panel (NMS 30).
- review and improve the systems to quality assure the work of the panel (NMS 30).
- establish policies and procedures to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks where they are different from those for children being fostered for longer periods (NMS 31).
- ensure the children's guide is suitable for all children fostered through the service and if necessary, produce the guide in different formats to meet the needs of different groups of children (NMS 1).
- ensure each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified socialworker (NMS 22).

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.