

Child Care Bureau Ltd

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Inspector	Suzanne Young
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	28 June 2007

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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

Child Care Bureau Ltd (CCB Ltd) is a family run, private limited company operating as an independent fostering agency. It has been operating since June 2000 and was registered in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 on 4 March 2004.

CCB Ltd offer a wide range of placements which are provided to children and young people from birth to 18 years old. CCB Ltd is based near Pershore in Worcestershire and recruits foster carers from a wide geographical area.

At the time of the inspection, CCB Ltd is supporting 30 fostering households with 39 children and young people in placement.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection during which all key standards were inspected. All outcome areas of the Every Child Matters framework were assessed.

CCB Ltd is judged as good overall with good outcomes being achieved in the outcome areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and organisation. Economic wellbeing is judged as being satisfactory.

The agency has some minor shortfalls in relation to policies and procedures, records and matching which do not fully underpin the work of the service. Actions and recommendations have been made in these areas.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The agency has complied with the actions identified at the last inspection. The agency maintains separate records of the matters set out under Regulation 22 and ensures all staff files meet Schedule 1 of the Fostering Services Regulations. A robust quality assurance system has also been developed which evaluates and promotes the care provided to children.

Recommendations relating to providing guidance to foster carers regarding smoking, child protection training, foster placement agreements, safe caring policies and risk assessments have all been complied with. The recommendation relating to evidencing matching has not improved and therefore will be remade.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The agency places a strong emphasis on the promotion of children's health and development. The agency actively ensures children receive health care which meets their need for physical, emotional and social development. These are being identified and met through appropriate matching with foster carers.

Foster carers ensure children are able to receive the medical care and attention they require by registering them with doctors, dentists and opticians. The agency continues to have good

links with external agencies. Specialised health services are actively sought for children and young people when this is required. The agency employs a child psychologist when needed to work with foster carers to support children in placement. This helps to ensure all children and young people have access to the appropriate medical and health services they require to support their health needs.

Health care matters are discussed and recorded during foster carers' supervision sessions and in foster carers recording. Carers maintain a comprehensive running record of all medical appointments, medication given and any other health related issues.

Foster carers are given clear guidance to help them promote children and young people's health and wellbeing. This includes advice on the promotion of physical, mental, sexual and emotional health. The agency has introduced a new core training programme which provides comprehensive training in areas such as health and safety within the home, working with children who self harm, healthy caring, drug awareness, sexual health, first aid and looking after children with disabilities. The agency also ensures carers are given specialist training before they look after children with complex health needs so they can fully meet those children's health requirements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The agency ensures good outcomes in relation to helping children to stay safe through comprehensive safeguarding systems and practices. Safe-caring policies are in place and reviewed on the placement of a child or young person. Risk assessments are also completed which help to safeguard children within their placements and ensure the individual needs of every child is considered.

The agency has systems in place which ensure the appropriate recruitment and vetting of staff, foster carers and panel members. The Registered Manager has the required qualifications and experience, is competent and well motivated to manage a regulated service.

Children's safety is further promoted as the agency has a comprehensive range of safeguarding and behaviour management training available to staff and foster carers which is part of their core training and is regularly updated.

The agency has a range of child protection and safe-caring policies in place to safeguard children. The child protection policy however does not include the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect should the concerns be about the agency or senior management of the agency. This could compromise children's safety.

The foster carers' homes visited are comfortable and friendly. The agency undertakes comprehensive and robust health and safety checks to ensure that foster homes are suitable for children and young people placed in them. This is further re-enforced as supervising social workers and the Registered Manager regularly visit the homes of foster carers on an unannounced basis.

Foster placement agreements are in place for all children and young people along with other placement planning information. Children and young people are well matched with their foster carers who enable their overall needs to be met and ensuring positive outcomes for children. This however is not supported in matching documentation. References to elements of matching

and identifying areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carers are not evidenced.

The agency operates its own fostering panel. The panel minutes demonstrate that a comprehensive quality assurance function is being provided by the panel and evidences that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There is a good understanding of equality and diversity by staff and foster carers who are aware of the importance of promoting individual needs within the foster placement. They are clear about how children's needs are to be met and address any issues that arise out of the child's ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality, faith or belief. The agency seeks to place children and young people with foster carers who are able to support and reflect their identities. The agency is mindful, when accepting referrals and in matching, that it is an organisation which operates largely within a rural area and is staffed by individuals from a white European background. As a result they are implementing a wider marketing strategy to attract and recruit staff and foster carers from a more diverse cross section of the community.

The agency actively supports foster carers to help increase the self esteem and confidence of children placed with them. Specialist counselling and training has been sought by the agency where required. The agency is willing to support and fund out-of-school activities to support children and raise confidence and self esteem.

Foster carers can access interpreters and translators for children and young people who do not speak or understand English. Translators are used to support contact when this has been identified as being needed. The agency actively supports carers in helping children practice and celebrate their religion. Foster carers attend training on identity and diversity and have written guidance on relevant legislation and their role and responsibilities.

Children and young people's educational attainment and achievement are given prominence. The agency actively promotes children's education to maximise their potential with good outcomes for children and young people being achieved. All children currently have a school or educational placement.

The Registered Manager regularly monitors the educational achievements of children and young people to ensure their needs are being met. Educational achievements are celebrated and the agency actively promotes education by working with local authorities to source support such as one-to-one tuition.

Foster carers support children and young people's education through attendance at education meetings and assist them with homework and study facilities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The agency encourages children and young people to maintain and develop family contacts. Arrangements for contact is considered during referral and matching and is clarified at the start of placement in foster placement agreements. Foster carers are expected to facilitate, transport

and supervise contact with birth families and keep comprehensive records of outcomes of contact visits. The manager is aware of the difficulties that can be experienced when foster carers supervise contact with birth families and the support worker is expected to take on this role if needed.

The views and opinions of children and young people are regularly sought by supervising social workers. The agency social workers see foster children on a monthly basis and complete monthly supervision forms which outline their views. Looked after children and birth children are also formally consulted during foster carers' annual reviews through questionnaires and during activity days. Foster carers' own children also are included in the pre-approval training which ensures their views and opinions are heard regarding fostering.

Children and young people are made aware of how to raise concerns or complaints through the children's guide they are given at the start of a placement. The Registered Manager is accessible to children and young people who have on occasions contacted him directly when they are not happy about an issue.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Foster carers provide support to young people in developing independence skills so that they are able to move successfully into independence. Carers encourage and support young people to develop skills to manage their domestic life, money, education and to develop social skills. They support the development of the Pathway Plan and help young people to understand what it means. An independent living skills assessment has been developed for foster carers to set future tasks to aid development and increase the skills base.

The agency supports foster carers through supervision and training. Guidance is in place for foster carers to help prepare young people for adulthood.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The agency has strong management and organisational practices to support the fostering task. It is organised in a way which delivers an effective service to children, young people and foster carers with good outcomes for children and young people being achieved.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The agency ensures staff and foster carers are aware of their responsibility to provide equality of opportunity to all children and young people regardless of race, culture, gender, disability and sexuality. The agency assesses the capacity of potential foster carers to meet the needs of children and young people with diverse needs and ensures that all children and young people are equally able to participate and achieve their potential.

Staff, foster carers and young people are able to understand the aims and objectives of the agency through a clear Statement of Purpose, employers' and carers' handbooks and children's guides. The children's guides however do not include the correct telephone number for Ofsted which could lead to delay if they wish to make a complaint.

Recently the agency has commissioned the services of a number of external bodies who specialise in online policies, procedures and web design to produce bespoke systems for the agency. The agency has a range of policies and procedures in place to ensure children and young people are looked after appropriately. The behaviour management policy however does not specifically refer to the restraint training delivered by the agency, nor does it specify that foster carers should not restrain young people without first undertaking the appropriate training. This could lead to some confusion for foster carers and compromise safety.

The Registered Manager has developed robust quality assurance systems including a system for auditing and reviewing staff files to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of care provided to children and young people. This ensures the quality of service to children and young people continues to develop and improve.

Assessments of foster carers are detailed and robust. They are completed to a good standard and test the required qualities, competences and aptitudes of the prospective foster carers. Staff and external assessors complete assessments of prospective foster carers.

The agency has clear lines of accountability which are known to staff and foster carers. The manager is accessible to staff, foster carers and young people. The staff team consists of the Registered Manager, two administrators, four full time supervising social workers including one senior practitioner and one support worker. During the inspection a student social worker was also in placement at the agency.

There is a positive team atmosphere. Foster carers feel well supported from the agency which in turn enables them to effectively support the children and young people who are placed with them. A good system of appropriate supervision and support is in place for foster carers. Training is a particular strength of the agency. There is a comprehensive training programme in place alongside the delivery of the Children's Workforce Development Council's training standards for foster carers. In addition 80% of foster carers are qualified to the National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

The agency's administrative records are adequate to meet the needs of the service. Records are well maintained to support and evidence the work undertaken. The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each foster carer and child in foster care. Storage of information, however, varies and information pertaining to young people is being stored inappropriately on foster carers' files. Storage of electronic records also varies in practice between foster carers.

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
1	ensure the children's guide contains the address and telephone number of ofsted (Regulation3(3))	30 November 2009

9	ensure the child protection policy sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. This refers to the procedures to take should the concerns be about the agency or senior management of the agency. (Regulation 12(1)(b))	30 November 2009
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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):

- ensure reference is made to elements of matching when agreeing the placement and identify areas where foster carers need additional support to compensate for any gaps in the match between the child and carers (NMS 8.4)
- ensure the fostering service's policies and procedures and any written guidance to staff and carers accurately reflect the fostering task (NMS 1.6)
- ensure separate records are kept for foster carers and children (NMS 25.2)
- ensure there is a procedure on the storing and managing of confidential records that is known to staff including electronic records. (NMS 25.8)