

# Foster Careline Ltd

Inspection report for Independent Fostering Agency

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

## 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**

Foster Careline Limited is an independent fostering agency, which is a limited company. It operates from an office base in Liverpool city centre. The agency assesses and supports foster carers to provide a range of placements for children and young people who are placed by neighbouring local authorities

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

At the time of this inspection, this service was not fully operational and it was not possible to fully inspect all aspects of the agency's practice. However, the service quite clearly aims to provide a variety of qualitative, fostering placements to children who are being looked after by local authorities. The agency is well managed and staff are all suitably qualified and experienced. There are robust arrangements for recruiting, assessing and training foster carers. This ensures that carers are suitable and that they have the knowledge and skills required to provide appropriate care to children and young people. The agency has arrangements in place for the supervision and support of carers, all of whom indicated that they were satisfied with the service provided by the agency. Two minor shortfalls were identified in this inspection and related to the foster placement and foster carer's agreement, which required developing.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

This is the first inspection of this service since its registration.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

At the time of the inspection, there were no children in placement. The agency has a number of policies, procedures and systems in place to support good practice in this area. For example the service has a system to record the administration of medication and ensure it is stored appropriately and securely. There is a risk assessment process for situations, where a child or young person has a specific health concern. The agency is also developing working relationships with key professionals and other agencies to promote the health of children and young people.

Carers have access to a range of training to provide them with appropriate

information, advice and understanding to promote the health of young people, including providing a nutritious diet. The agency is ensuring its carers have an up-to-date first aid qualification, with at least one carer in each household having received appropriate first aid training. The agency expects its carers to encourage and support young people to be aware of the importance of developing a healthy life style. There are clear systems in place to support foster carers to discuss health matters.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

The agency's recruitment policy and procedure ensures that there are robust and effective systems in place for appropriate vetting of all staff. For example, staff are requested to provide a full employment history; where gaps in employment have been identified these are explored. References are sought and further confirmation of references is followed up with confirmation by telephone. Personnel files examined contained all the required information to demonstrate that staff are suitable to work with children.

The recruitment and selection of foster carers also follows robust systems, including Criminal Records Bureau enhanced disclosures; there is a renewal process for these. References for carers are in place and the agency ensures that the views gained from each prospective foster carer's own children, both adult children and those still living at home, are clearly recorded. In addition, the views from previous partners are also gathered to ensure a holistic assessment is undertaken.

Health and safety checks, including pet assessments, vehicle checks are completed and there is a system to update these annually in each foster home. There is a risk assessment system to take into account children's behavioural needs.

The agency ensures carers can provide a very good standard of accommodation for the children and young people using its services. Their homes are well maintained, internally and externally. They provide young people with spacious accommodation and a healthy and safe environment. The service makes sure that there is a separate bedroom for each young person and communal spaces within the home are comfortable and homely. Carers are trained in health and safety issues and supervising social workers undertake an initial health and safety check on all foster carer's households. There is a system to review health and safety matters in every supervisory visit and any shortfalls are effectively addressed.

There are satisfactory arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children and young people. Carers are trained in safe care and this enables them to develop a good understanding of issues that may affect the safety and welfare of the children and young people they care for. For example, they are trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and are given clear guidance about what they should do if they identify a safeguarding concern. Carers, with the support of their supervising social worker, develop a safe care policy for their own home. The agency has a clear protocol for responding to incidents where a young

person may go missing from a carer's home. Carers understand the protocol and know what they should do if a young person goes missing.

The importance of matching children with carers is fully recognised and is clearly reflected in their policies and procedures. Matching considerations are carefully explored from the outset of a carer's contact with the agency and throughout the assessment and approval process. Staff's experience and training in matching, as well as their knowledge of the carers, greatly enhances their ability to appropriately match young people with carers. However, the foster placement agreement does not contain all the required information.

The fostering panel is organised to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval, review or de-registration of foster carers. Its chair and panel members have a wide variety and range of relevant experience which contributes to the decision making process. Its membership complies with the Fostering Regulations.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

The service promotes equality and diversity through the assessment and training of carers and with the promotion of appropriate policies and procedures. The agency is working hard to recruit carers who will meet the diverse needs of children requiring a foster placement. Carers demonstrate an understanding of their role in promoting equality and diversity, as well as encouraging children and young people to develop their self-esteem.

The agency has a clear expectation on carers to actively promote education and encourage the educational achievement of the children and young people in their care. This is clearly illustrated by the agency's policies, procedures and their assessment, approval and training of foster carers. There is also an expectation that foster carers provide and support young people to become involved in constructive leisure activities and to develop their talents and interests.

The service's carers have a wide range of skills, as well as involvement in a variety of family and community activities. All were enthusiastic about sharing and involving any young person who may be placed in their in these social activities.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Carers are clear about their role in promoting constructive contact with family and friends in accordance with any legal direction, care plan and personal preference. Individual contact arrangements are to be obtained prior to placement.

There are satisfactory systems to support children and young people to positively

contribute to their daily lives and their futures. However, at the time of the inspection, it was not possible to see these systems in practice as there were no children and young people in placement.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

The fostering service has good arrangements to support children and young people's preparation for adulthood. Foster carers are given appropriate training and there are clear policies to guide them in this aspect of their work.

Carers clearly had the competency and understanding to ensure that all young people in their care should have the opportunity to develop the social and practical skills they need for future independence and at a pace that is appropriate to their individual age and needs.

There is a clear structure for foster carer payment. They provide foster carers with sufficient finance to support children to pursue educational and leisure interests and participate fully in the community.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The agency values and promotes equality and diversity; these matters are clearly reflected in their policies and procedures. All staff and carers have undertaken equality and diversity training. The agency is working hard to recruit a diverse group of carers.

The manager is experienced and appropriately qualified and provides effective leadership and support to social workers and foster carers. There is good management oversight of the work of the agency. The manager regularly supervises staff, attends team meetings; Checks reports and records, as well as regularly meeting carers and members of the foster panel.

The agency has a clear Statement of Purpose which outlines its aims and objectives and services provided. Children's interests are the primary consideration of the agency. Its policies and procedures inform the work of the agency and are implemented by qualified and experienced staff who themselves are well trained and supported to maintain their focus on child-centred practice. The agency also provides written information about fostering to children and young people.

The recruitment and approval processes for foster carers are robust, ensuring that the service provides foster carers who are suitable and competent. Assessments of prospective carers are undertaken by a qualified social worker and detailed reports are presented to the foster panel. The panel is made up of a number of independent professionals and includes an experienced independent foster carer. Since the service

has been in operation for less than a year, there have been no annual reviews of carers. However, the agency has good arrangements in place for managing these.

Carers made positive comments about the way their application to the agency had been dealt with, saying that the assessment process was 'thorough' and 'fair'. The recruitment process for carers includes detailed vetting procedures. Staff and panel members recruited to the service are also appropriately vetted. These checks protect young people as they ensure that all carers and staff who work for the agency are assessed as suitable.

Carers undertake a core programme of training during their induction and are required to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council training for foster carers. Members of the foster panel are also given appropriate training to maintain their knowledge and skills. Carers feel that training opportunities are good.

The agency's foster care agreements ensure foster carers have a full understanding of what is expected of them. However, the agreement does not fully detail the amount of support and training provided to carers.

The service maintains clear written records of all aspects of its work. Carers' files and other information that is kept in the office are stored securely. All carers are provided with copies of all the agency's policies and procedures. Carers understand what information they need to keep about young people and that this is to be kept safe within their homes to protect confidentiality. The service is based in suitable premises that are kept secure.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Recommendations**

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

- develop the format of the foster placement agreement to ensure they provide the information set out in Schedule 6 of the Fostering Services Regulations (NMS 8.4)
- ensure the foster care agreement is developed so that it contains all the support and training provided to carers. (NMS 22.4)