

Red Kite Fostering Limited

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

Unique reference number	SC417504
Inspection date	31/08/2012
Inspector	Dawn Bennett
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Agency performing the function(s) of LAs

Setting address	2 High Street, KINGTON, Herefordshire, HR5 3AX
------------------------	--

Telephone number	01544 231657
Email	carole@therhos.fsnet.co.uk
Registered person	Red Kite Fostering Limited
Registered manager	Anthony John Collier
Responsible individual	Carole Lynne Barnes
Date of last inspection	17/01/2011

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is an independent fostering agency that was founded in January 2011. It provides long-term, short-term and emergency family-based placements for children and young people aged between 0 and 18 years, including sibling groups and children and young people with or without learning and/or physical disabilities.

The agency is currently looking after nine children and young people and has fifteen fostering households providing full-time care.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

This newly registered independent fostering agency is effectively meeting its business targets whilst adhering to its very clear aims and objectives. Comprehensive assessments of foster carers' skills are conducted and robust risk assessments are carried out. Children and young people are well matched in stable placements that are effectively meeting their needs. Children and young people form positive relationships with foster carers and their fostering household. As a result they achieve good outcomes in relation to their development, health and education. Their safety is actively promoted and supported.

A key strength of the agency lies in foster carer's having direct access to the Registered Manager for support and guidance. Foster carers are well trained and receive good quality supervision and support. They work as a team with staff and other professionals and feel highly valued. Children and young people are also highly valued by their carers and by the agency. Foster carers, staff and managers actively promote a family-friendly atmosphere within the agency.

Two recommendations have been made relating to safer caring and safeguarding training for foster carer's family members and panel members.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure appropriate training on safer caring is provided for all members of the foster household, including young people of sufficient age and understanding (NMS 20.9)
- ensure the fostering service's safeguarding procedure is known to fostering service staff, such as panel members. (NMS 22.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Children and young people receive a high level of individualised care that meets their social, emotional, psychological and physical needs. They are well matched with foster families and experience positive care. Their needs in relation to their ability, ethnicity and identity are also well met. Children and young people are genuinely part of the foster family. They experience acceptance and stability. They are happy in their foster placements and make good progress to develop a positive self-view, and make and sustain strong attachments with their carers. They have a good understanding of their background and identity through positive contact with family and friends. Since the registration of this service they have been no unplanned endings to placements.

Children and young people achieve good health and education outcomes. For example, attendance at school, developmental and educational progress is excellent. They are fit and healthy. Young people, children and foster carers have direct access to a range of professionals through the agency and placing authorities. Young people and children with more complex health conditions have their needs met effectively. This is because foster carers are properly trained and supervised by medical professionals. This promotes young people's and children's healthy development. One local authority health care professional stated, 'Health visitors report that there are good interactions between the children and their foster carers. All children are making good progress and are placed with professional carers who have the appropriate qualifications and expertise to meet the children's complex health needs.'

Children and young people actively participate in the day-to-day decisions involving them and in decisions that influence their lives. They share their views in a range of ways. For example, through foster carers reviews, statutory reviews and during supervising social workers visits. Foster carers, supported by the agency, also advocate strongly on behalf of the children and young people living with them. This ensures they receive the help and support needed for positive outcomes.

Children and young people's independence is supported and takes into account their

age and ability. They develop social skills and key practical skills and participate in community based clubs and activities. This develops their confidence, self-esteem and helps them mature as young people. One foster carer stated: 'The young person in placement has settled well and has made good progress. Some of his earlier behaviours upon arrival in placement have greatly diminished. He is able to focus more readily and appears a lot more relaxed. He attends Boy's Brigade on a weekly basis. We remain with him each week in order to provide guidance and supervision throughout the session. Over the months, he has made steady progress and is now interacting much better with the other children. He is beginning to follow directions better from the leaders and stay on task.'

Quality of service

The quality of the service is **good**.

The fostering agency recruits a diverse range of carers who meet the range of needs of the children and young people placed. There is a clear strategy to recruit and increase the number and expertise of foster carers. This includes foster carers for young siblings and those requiring a permanent home for older young people. Overall, the recruitment of foster carers shows diversity in relation to age, gender, ability, faith and religion. Recruitment is effectively monitored and is in line with the agency's values and ethos.

The assessments of foster carers are clear, comprehensive and evaluative. They focus strongly on the needs of children and young people. The preparation and training of prospective foster carers enables them to have a good understanding of the complexities surrounding the fostering task. The fostering panel is functioning effectively. It makes timely and child-centred recommendations. It is robust in its scrutiny of foster carer assessments and reviews. A good level of quality assurance function has been developed which ensures the quality of assessments are improved and maintained. All assessments, the foster carers' first review, and where changes to approval are required, are considered by the panel.

The quality of placement matching is strong. It ensures children and young people's needs are considered and matched to carers' skills. Foster carers clearly understand the needs of children and young people placed with them. One foster carer stated: 'We are confident that all information received by the fostering agency is shared with us as appropriate.' Gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding are met through training, support and supervision. As a result, children and young people establish positive relationships in stable placements.

Foster carers are well trained to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for. One foster carer stated: 'My training since approval has helped me to meet children and young people's needs.' There is good quality induction, mandatory and developmental training. Where complex health needs require specialist care, such as tube feeding, foster carers are given specific training which is individualised to each child and young person prior to placement. This ensures the complex health needs of children are fully met. One foster carer stated: 'The agency have been

supportive in funding me to attend more specific training in the areas of autism and disability. This was important for the fostering task and also for my own professional development. The agency have also paid for me to become a member of Autism West Midlands.'

Foster carers have a good working relationship with the fostering agency and work as part of the team. They are actively involved in planning, and their views are highly regarded by the agency. Foster carers feel they are treated as professionals with their views valued by the agency. One foster carer stated: 'The agency offer regular support group meetings that provide an opportunity for the foster carers to get together and for the agency to update the foster carers on any new developments or changes that are taking place.'

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Children and young people are safe because their well-being is effectively promoted by foster carers and staff. They have a clear understanding that their role is to safeguard children and young people at all times. These responsibilities are underpinned by the agency's policies and procedures and regular training. Safety is a priority during the matching process and throughout placement. Recruitment, assessment, preparation and supervision of carers have a strong focus on safeguarding. This is enhanced by effective monitoring and oversight of foster carers under the guidance of supervising social workers. For example, unannounced visits take place and the safe caring policies are effectively implemented in practice in fostering households.

Safer caring training is run for all foster carers and members of the foster carer's households. The agency does not maintain a record of which additional household members have attended this training. This does not enable the agency to monitor the expertise of each household in safely meeting children's and young people's needs. The majority of panel members have received safeguarding training through their professional backgrounds, however, some have not. Training has not been provided to the panel on the agency's procedure in line with government guidance to ensure that required actions are taken, or have been taken, in any relevant situation of which it is aware.

Relationships within fostering households are positive. Foster carers are able to set appropriate and fair boundaries. They do not identify bullying as an issue. Foster carers are vigilant, act appropriately to concerns raised by children and are good at dealing with issues as they arise. They communicate effectively with schools, supervising social workers and the child's social worker. Children know how to complain if they are unhappy. The children's guide details how they can make a complaint and who to speak to if they have any concerns. There have been no complaints from children or young people since the agency was registered.

The agency is a safe environment for staff and carers to work. There is an open

culture within the agency which encourages whistle blowing. Procedures are in place to ensure allegations are handled carefully and promptly. There have been no safeguarding referrals since the agency was registered. Incidents of children and young people going missing from their foster homes are minimal. Where instances have occurred they have been appropriately reported and managed.

Recruitment is robust. Good consideration is being given to achieving a balanced workforce in terms of diversity. The fostering service has an effective whistle-blowing policy which is well communicated to staff and foster carers. This additionally safeguards children from abuse. Supervising social workers complete unannounced visits to foster carers' homes, and health and safety pre-approval risk assessments, which are updated annually.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the independent fostering agency are **good**.

This is the first Ofsted inspection since the registration of this agency in January 2011. Since its registration the agency has successfully recruited foster carers, exceeding its business plan's stated aims. First applicants were presented to panel in August 2011 and children were placed in October 2011.

The agency has a Statement of Purpose and children's guide. They are clear and accessible to all so everyone is clear about the aims and objectives of the agency.

Up until recently the agency has been operating with the Registered Manager and sessional supervising social workers, undertaking some foster carer assessments, and a part-time, permanent family support worker. As the agency has developed and grown, a part time supervising social worker has been recruited to start in mid September 2012. An administration assistant is also due to be recruited to support the administration manager. This post will be in place by the end of September 2012.

The agency is well managed. Staff and carers feel supported and valued. They highly praise the support they receive from the Registered Manager. One foster carer stated: 'The Registered manager helps me to understand my foster children's needs.' Another foster carer stated: 'The agency provide us with regular respite, training and immediate response with help and answers at difficult times. Living close to the office means we can just pop in anytime for coffee and a chat and keep well updated with any upcoming events or trainings or just to say how we're doing.'

Staff supervision takes place on a regular basis and an appraisal process is in place. The Registered Manager receives professional supervision independent of the agency. Staff are qualified and experienced. Newly appointed staff and sessional staff receive appropriate induction and mentoring. This promotes positive, safe care for children and young people, and practice in line with the agencies values and ethos. Foster carers benefit from an inclusive approach and are valued and respected as key people who make a difference to the child's life.

Complaints are dealt with professionally and sensitively. Foster carers and panel members contribute towards service delivery and development. Foster carers contribute and help with training. Panel members have been consulted in the development of foster carer assessments and reports.

The agency has established effective and positive working relationships with other professionals. One placing social worker commented: 'The care afforded to the young person placed is of an exceptionally high standard. The foster carer is confident in her care and she ensures all of her care needs are met. The foster carers has close and regular contact with me e.g. informing me of all hospital admissions/discharges and appointments. Since being placed with the foster carers this young person has matured and developed and I have no doubt she will continue to do so.' Another stated: 'I have regular contact with the Registered Manager. Any queries I raise are responded to promptly, daily recording are sent to me on a regular basis and these recordings are detailed and informative.'

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for independent fostering agencies.