

# Quality Fostering

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC068494
<b>Inspection date</b>	31/01/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Suzanne Young
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	

---

<b>Setting address</b>	Phoenix House, 73-75 Priory Road, KENILWORTH, Warwickshire, CV8 1LQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	08458380952
<b>Email</b>	anne@qualityfostering.com
<b>Registered person</b>	Quality Fostering Limited
<b>Registered manager</b>	Anne Theresa Walker
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Helen Sylvia Rae
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	11/05/2009

---

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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

Quality Fostering Ltd is an independent fostering agency based in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. The agency recruits, assesses, approves and supervises foster carers to provide a range of placement options including, emergency; short-term; bridging; respite; long-term placements; asylum placements, and parent and child placements. At the time of the inspection the service supports 29 foster families who care for 29 children and young people.

### 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 **adequate**.

Outcomes for children and young people are good. This is because they receive a good level of care from their foster carers that meet their social, emotional, psychological and physical needs. They are making good progress in all aspects of their development and are positive about the care they receive. Children and young people are well matched in stable placements. This results in very low instances of unplanned endings of placements. Thorough assessments of foster carers' skills are conducted and accurate safe care plans are generally in place. These help ensure children and young people are kept safe and experience positive outcomes.

The agency is adequately resourced. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced and feel supported. Foster carers' satisfaction with the agency, however, is variable. Some carers report having excellent support from their supervising social workers, while others feel unsupported and not valued by the agency.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Management do not fully understand the strengths and weakness of the service they provide. This is because they have not been adequately monitoring the performance of the agency. The lack of appropriate management oversight of the agency has led to a number of shortfalls in meeting the regulations and national minimum standard. These, however, have not impacted significantly on the welfare or safety of children and young people. The

shortfalls relate to foster carer training, reviews, records, monitoring and unannounced visits.

## Areas for improvement

### Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
3 (2011)	ensure the children's guides include the address, email address and telephone number of the Chief Inspector (Regulation 3(c))	28/02/2013
13 (2011)	prepare and implement a written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents (Regulation 13(1))	28/02/2013
17 (2011)	provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them (Regulation 17(1))	28/02/2013
23 (2011)	ensure the fostering panel has sufficient members, and that individual members have between them the experience and expertise necessary, to effectively discharge the functions of the panel (Regulation 23(7))	31/03/2013
28 (2011)	ensure a foster carer's review must take place a year after approval and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider consider it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year (Regulation 28(2))	28/02/2013
30 (2011)	ensure case records for each foster parent includes a record of each placement, including the name, age, and sex of each child placed, the dates on which each placement began and terminated, and the circumstances of the termination (Regulation 30(3)(a))	28/02/2013
35 (2011)	ensure a system is maintained for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency (Regulation 35(1))	31/03/2013
35 (2011)	provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for monitoring and improving the quality of foster care. (Regulation 35(2))	31/03/2013

### Recommendations

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

- implement a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. For example, that

avoidable hazards are reduced consistent with a family home and that safer care plans have sufficient information to help foster carers to keep children safe (NMS 4.5)

- ensure the fostering service's procedures are compatible with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where each foster home is located and that these are being complied with (NMS 5.6)
- ensure all children's guides include information informing how children and young people can contact the Children's Rights Director (NMS 16.4)
- ensure the fostering service has a record of the recruitment and suitability checks which have been carried out for all those working for the fostering service which includes identity checks (including a recent photograph) and where the person has lived outside of the UK, further checks, as are considered appropriate (NMS 19.1)
- ensure appropriate training is provided for all members of the foster household, including young people of sufficient age and understanding (NMS 20.9)
- ensure each foster carer has at least one unannounced visit a year (NMS 21.8)
- ensure each person on the central list is given induction training which is completed within 10 weeks of joining the central list (NMS 23.9)
- ensure all staff, including all those on the central list, have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and where they are working with children, this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for (NMS 24.6)
- ensure information about individual children is kept confidential and is only accessible and shared with those who have a legitimate and current need to know. (NMS 26.4)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people receive a good level of individualised care that meet their social, emotional, psychological and physical needs. They make and sustain strong attachments with their foster carers which enables them to develop a positive self-view. Children and young people are happy in their foster placements and are treated as part of the family. One young person commented, 'she is the best person who has been there for me', another commented, 'I am able to feel relaxed here.'

Children and young people are supported and enabled to share their views, wishes and feelings by their foster carers and by supervising social workers. They are involved in decisions about their care and participate in their reviews. Foster carers know and understand the importance of gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people. They act as advocates to ensure that the children and

young people in their care are listened and responded to. In addition, this is echoed by the agency though supervising social worker visits. Supervising social workers visit and speak with children and observe them in the carer's home.

Placement stability is good as children and young people very rarely experience unplanned endings. The agency has only had one unplanned ending within the last 12 months. This is because children and young people are appropriately matched with foster carers who can meet their needs.

Children and young people's needs in relation to their ability, ethnicity and identity are also being well met. The number of minority ethnic foster carers enables appropriate consideration and matching to take place in relation to ethnicity. Foster carers actively promote links with children and young people's religion. For example, they ensure they have easy access to Mosques, the Koran, and prayer mats. They also seek support and information from community groups to promote children and young people's religious beliefs. This ensures children and young people develop a good knowledge and understanding of their religion and culture.

Children and young people's health and education needs are well supported by their foster carers whose care and vigilance has resulted in good outcomes being achieved. Foster carers actively seek and engage with health professionals. Children and young people are healthy and are well supported to learn about healthy lifestyles. They rarely engage in activities such as smoking and drug or alcohol use. Children and young people attend school regularly and make good personal progress in their educational achievements. This is because foster carers provide them with excellent support and encouragement. Foster carers use imaginative ways to engage with children and young people at home, using board games, books and computers to stimulate their interest and promote their education. One placing social worker commented, 'the family has provided a period of real stability...as a result he has completed his formal education and now attending college.'

Children and young people benefit from contact with their family and friends. Foster carers work in partnership with birth families to promote positive contact as agreed in care plans. One young person commented, 'They have taken me to contact and to ice skating. I like the way they have let my dad and sister come to the house for contact.' Supervising social workers ensure all children and young people have access to independent visitors who require this service.

Young people acquire the practical and life skills needed to successfully attain independence. Foster carers advocate strongly on behalf of the young people living with them to help get the services needed to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood. All young people have a relevant pathway plan in place to secure future aspiration, skills and education.

## **Quality of service**

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

The agency recruits a diverse range of foster carers who can effectively meet the needs of the children and young people they care for. The preparation, assessment and matching of foster carers is good and leads to effective placements. The assessments of foster carers focus on the needs of children and are thorough and analytical. Prospective foster carers are well prepared prior to becoming approved which enables them to have a clear understanding of the complexities surrounding the fostering task. Clear matching is taking place with considered thinking of children's needs to carers' skills. This ensures well matched stable placements are made. Carer's attitude, skills and social networks are examined during the assessment process and considered when matching children and young people to foster carers. Foster carers usually receive adequate information to allow them to care for children and young people placed with them.

The conduct and management of panel is adequate, although, appraisals and induction training for new panel members are not taking place to ensure adequacy in panel members' performance. There are also shortfalls in the membership of the fostering panel as there is no-one currently with education experience. This can compromise the decision making process as the education of looked after children and young people are matters which are likely to feature in panel discussion. The fostering panel makes timely and child centred recommendations. It is robust in its scrutiny of foster carer assessments and reviews which ensure the quality of assessments are improved and maintained. All assessments, foster carers' first reviews and where changes to approval are required, are considered by panel. Subsequent foster carer's reviews are not all being conducted within 12 months as required in legislation.

A varied training programme for foster carers has been developed which includes both induction and mandatory training. There are a number of shortfalls, however, in the training. The training, support and development standards have not been completed with the required timescales. There is general lack of clarity regarding the timeliness of the completion of mandatory training by foster carers. This had led to some gaps in the completion of core training by a minority of carers in a timely manner. Foster carers are not provided with administration of medication training and the agency does not provide restraint training to foster carers despite its policy stating that this will be provided. Safer caring training is also not being provided for all members of the fostering household, including young people who are of sufficient age and understanding. Adequate training enables carers' and members of their household to develop their skills and knowledge to be able to meet the needs of the children and young people placed with them.

Foster carers are receiving adequate support and supervision. The experiences of individual foster carers are, however, variable. Many feel well supported by their supervising social workers. One foster carer commented, 'support is brilliant', another commented, 'I had a very challenging time for a year. They supported me massively.' A few carers, however, feel the agency could be more proactive in supporting them to access services for children and young people and in challenging other professionals when needed.

## Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are supported to feel safe by their foster carers and relationships within fostering households are positive. Foster carers act as advocates for children and young people and respond appropriately to protect those who experience bullying. One young person commented, 'I am loved and it is safe. I am looked after very well.' Children and young people know how to complain. 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 over the last 12 months.

The agency has low instances of young people going missing and where this has occurred these have only been for short periods of time. Prompt action is taken to minimise this risk taken in partnership with appropriate professionals. The agency, however does not have copies of the Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols applicable to the area where each foster home is located. This is necessary to ensure they are complying with the local RMFHC for each area. There have been no referrals to the Independent Safeguarding Authority or child protection enquiries in the last 12 months.

Foster carers receive training in safeguarding and child protection which ensures they are aware of the procedures they need to take to keep children and young people safe. The assessment and preparation of carers have a clear focus on safeguarding. Each household has a health and safety audit, completed on assessment and reviewed annually, which examines any risks inside and outside the home. The agency's systems to ensure that children and young people are kept safe, however, are not strong. All fostering households have detailed safe caring plans adapted to the needs of the child. Although regularly updated, these do not always include essential information, such as how to safely manage a young person's drug misuse. Unannounced visits are conducted to foster homes to make sure they are safe and suitable for children. These, however, are not always taking place on an annual basis as required.

There is an established staff recruitment and vetting procedure. All those working for the agency have appropriate disclosure checks and references are taken up and verified. There are, however, some gaps in respect of overseas checks having taken place and in photographic identification on staff and panel members' files.

## Leadership and management

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

Since the last inspection the agency has expanded considerably. The number of foster carers and children and young people have more than trebled. The agency is sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of children and young people and to



promote placement stability. The number of staff has significantly increased and five permanent members of staff are now employed. In the last 12 months the agency has investigated one complaint. This was conducted appropriately.

The Registered Manager has recently left the agency and appropriate interim management arrangements have been put in place. Over the last year, however, there has not been adequate management of the agency and this has impacted on service provision. The shortfalls demonstrated in this report, such as foster carers' annual reviews and unannounced visits not taking place in a timely manner demonstrate the lack of appropriate management oversight of the agency. Managers have not been adequately monitoring the performance of the agency. Systems to monitor practice issues, which ensure compliance with the agencies' policies, to identify patterns and trends and to give base lines which evidence quality care and outcomes for children are not adequately developed.

There is no system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping. Information pertaining to individual children is often kept inappropriately on siblings files. As a result information is not confidential and may prevent children and young people having full access to their files. Case records relating to foster carers also do not meet required standards. A record of each placement is not held on foster carers' files in line with regulation.

The service has a foster carer handbook, a Statement of Purpose and two children's guides which are clear and accessible to all ages. The children's guides, however do not both include the address, email address and telephone number for Ofsted or the contact details of the Children's Rights Director. This could affect a child or young person being able to contact inspectors if they wish to make a concern.

Regulatory shortfalls raised at the last inspection with respect to staff vetting records and foster care annual reviews have not been adequately addressed. The recommendation with regard to foster carer training has also not been appropriately implemented.

Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Supervisions are taking place regularly and staff feel they have ample training and development opportunities. One supervising social worker commented, 'We have had a lot of training. The agency is responsive to our training needs.' Staff, however, are not receiving annual appraisals to ensure they are providing a high quality service to children and young people.

Staff and Foster carers have established effective partnership working with placing social workers, health, education and the police. One independent reviewing officer commented, 'I have not worked with said agency previously, however in the short time I have the experience has been positive.' A placing social worker stated, 'I was overall impressed with the service provided by Quality Fostering and the social worker involved, who definitely had the young person's best interests at the forefront.' Not all foster carers, however, feel they are valued and considered part of the team working around the child. One foster carer commented, 'the main issue I would identify for improvement would be to support carers when they have issues

and are fighting for their placement needs and feelings to be considered and met.'

## 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.