

# Regional Foster Placements

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC442774
<b>Inspection date</b>	22/02/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Elaine Cray
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Agency performing the function(s) of LAs

---

<b>Setting address</b>	Sapphire House, Roundtree Way, NORWICH, NR7 8SQ
------------------------	---

<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 441390
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Regional Foster Placements Limited
<b>Registered manager</b>	Shaun Burland
<b>Responsible individual</b>	John Catterall
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	15/03/2012

---

© 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

Regional Foster Placements aims to recruit, train and support a broad range of families and single people who can provide both short and long term placements for children and young people.

Their aim is to recruit a diverse range of carers who will be able to provide placements, which reflect the different socio-economic, cultural and ethnic backgrounds in the East Anglian region. The agency aims to promote a secure base and positive placements for all children and young people. Currently there are 21 children and young people accessing the fostering service and 17 fostering households.

This agency was registered in March 2012 and this is the first inspection.

### 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**.

The fostering agency has been operating for a little less than a year. The agency provides a number of fostering households which effectively and quickly establish children and young people in stable placements. Children and young people say they enjoy living within their foster family.

Children and young people make good progress. Their welfare and physical, social, emotional and behavioural development are fully supported as a result of careful and sensitive matching. Children and young people feel safe and looked after because their needs are matched with foster carers with relevant skills, abilities and circumstances.

The agency is effective in taking its responsibility to promote corporate parenting. Key strengths in safeguarding knowledge and persistent liaison with placing social workers promote the welfare of children and young people.

Children and young people experience significant improvement across all aspects of growing up. They grow in self-esteem, embrace new opportunities and come to a greater understanding of their own family backgrounds and circumstances.

Foster carers have high aspirations for children and young people. For example, children and young people benefit from improved attendance at school, improve their learning outcomes and enjoy a range of recreational opportunities.

A key strength of the agency is the recruitment and assessment of foster carers. This is accomplished through providing clear expectations and information to potential foster carers. Foster carers develop an early understanding that caring for foster children can be challenging yet rewarding. Foster carers show strong commitment and are fully supported to undertake their role as a foster carer. They are valued members of the agency.

The service develops against a backdrop of effective and rigorous monitoring by the Registered Person. Foster carers maintain detailed records, providing meaningful information for tracking the progress and development of children and young people. As the service expands, monitoring processes are developing and beginning to firmly embed into the management of the service.

As a result of this inspection, three statutory requirements are set. These relate to updating information in the Statement of Purpose and Ofsted's address in the complaints' procedure. Also to extend consultation with children, young people, foster carers and placing authorities in monitoring and improving the quality of care of the service. None of these areas adversely impact on the continued good outcomes that children and young people achieve.

## 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.

<b>Reg.</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due date</b>
4 (2011)	keep the agency's Statement of Purpose under review and notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days (Regulation 4 (a) and (b))	29/03/2013
18 (2011)	ensure the written procedure for considering complaints includes the up to date address (including email address) of the Chief Inspector (Regulation 18 (3) (a))	29/03/2013
35 (2011)	continue to develop strategies for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority for monitoring and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35)	29/03/2013

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people receive good, individualised care that meets their social, emotional, psychological and physical needs. Their placements are stable and secure and they say they feel part of their foster families.

Children and young people are happy in their foster placements and say they are making good progress. Young people complimented their foster families and acknowledge significant improvements in their behaviour. Their comments include, 'I feel safe with my foster carers', 'we are a family' and 'the best thing is that I get trust.'

Social workers say foster carers have, 'Put in firm boundaries and expectations, which has enabled children to settle within the placement and aspire to do well in school.' they are, 'Able to make safe decisions' and 'Consistent boundary setting has seen an improvement in behaviour.'

The diverse and individual needs of children and young people are clearly identified and celebrated. Children and young people grow in self-esteem. They embrace new opportunities and come to a greater understanding about their own family backgrounds and circumstances.

Children and young people effectively engage with foster carers. They feel valued because their views, wishes and feelings are listened to. Children and young people say they are actively involved in day-to-day decisions that influence their lives. The majority of children and young people know about their future plans. They are very pleased that their foster carers help them represent their views about living with their foster family, contact with their families and what they hope for the future.

Children and young people benefit from contact with their family and friends. Contact arrangements are well managed. Foster carers work in partnership to the agreed contact arrangements in the child's care plan. Detailed records about outcomes from contact are carefully reviewed during foster carer's monthly supervision. Children and young people feel very supported by foster carers with regard to family contact. In many cases foster carers are involved in transporting a child to and from their contact visits and offer this practical support because it is seen as the least disruptive to the child.

Children and young people have good information about the fostering agency. Some younger children enjoyed colouring in and drawing pictures in the children's guide to help them find out about being fostered. Older young people receive a different guide which is more relevant to their age and levels of understanding. Children and

young people say their foster carers helped with explaining the children's guide. They also enjoyed a group event held at Christmas where they met other people who work at and run the agency.

Children and young people say foster carers are very good at making sure they are healthy and go to medical appointments. All young people are encouraged to eat healthily and try new foods, especially different fruit and vegetables. Some children and young people are very pleased with their new and trendy new glasses after visits to the optician. Younger children have made excellent progress in catching up on the early stages of development. For example, basic toilet training, learning to walk, cleaning teeth and eating a healthy diet.

Young people feel more secure and informed about their health. They appreciate the support they receive when foster carers take them to medical and hospital appointments. Some children and young people now have clearer diagnoses regarding some health and medical matters.

Children and young people have great pride in improved school attendance and their achievements. They are keen to talk about their 100% attendance, no longer getting detentions, rewards for doing homework and enjoying reading. Many young people talk about ambitions for education and employment; including becoming a mechanic, a doctor, following a career in music and working in a shop. Young people's comments such as, 'My possibilities are endless' exemplifies this culture of high aspiration and belief in potential.

The majority of young people living with foster carers from this agency are younger children and early teenagers. Children and young people say they are fully involved in family living. This includes helping around the house, being responsible for pets and learning how to cook. Some are very proud of their budgeting skills and the benefits of saving pocket money.

The matching process recently used for older young people gives a good indication of the fostering agency's awareness about preparing young people for independence. Older young people greatly value the positive, nurturing approach of the foster family. A key impact on young people's stability and self-esteem has been the trust and added responsibility given to older young people. This is possible as foster carers have extensive experience of working with older young people who are looking to live independently in the community.

## Quality of

The quality of the is **good**.

Recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers are good. The vast majority of foster carers live within the local authority. This, on the whole, facilitates children and young people to be placed close to their families, school and community.

The conduct and management of panel is effective. There are a sufficient number of

panel members with relevant experience and expertise to carry out the panel function and responsibilities. The quality of assessments is greatly improving as a result of helpful feedback from panel members about early submissions. The agency decision maker commented, 'I have to ask and think less' due to the quality of information provided. The fostering panel is managed to a good standard with effective decision making and acting in the best interests of the child.

The agency has steadily and effectively recruited foster carers. There is sufficient staff to carry out assessment and provide support to the growing team of foster carers. Foster carers value the rigour and sensitive approach to the assessment process. They feel these values and high expectations permeate throughout the service; extending to training, good levels of supervision, matching and access to staff who are efficient and reliable.

Foster carers are very satisfied with the agency and the level of support and service they receive.

Foster carer's assessment, preparation and training are good. All foster carers attend a 'Skills to Foster' training programme. This training is recently reinforced with 'Secure Base' training. Foster carers are extremely positive about the training programme. They say the training is very child focused and looks at the complexity of need of children and young people. All the training consistently reinforces the agency's focus and priority on safe and stable placements. Foster carers say they all looked forward to their first placement. They felt fully prepared due to the meaningful training provided by the agency.

At the time of inspection no foster carers had completed their first year as approved foster carers. However all are currently working to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) training award. Those foster carers with imminent foster carer annual reviews are near to completion of the CWDC training.

Foster carers are enthusiastic about how they are valued members of the agency. They say they feel recognised and fully supported. The agency is relatively small and foster carers and supporting social workers have good relationships. Foster carers say, 'I feel very privileged to be approved as a foster carer' and, 'My supervising social worker is fantastic, easy to talk and extremely supportive.' The Registered Manager and business administrator are both familiar and accessible to the foster carers. Foster carers clearly value and benefit from regular and consistent visits by supervising social workers. They also have added confidence about the support they have received and can access from all staff throughout the agency.

One agency supervising social worker commented, 'The staff team here are highly experienced, having worked in statutory services, child protection and in other independent fostering agencies. This brings a real strength to the knowledge and expertise to produce a high quality functioning team.'

The agency is persistent and robust in obtaining and gathering information prior and post placement of the child. Foster carers have great confidence in the commitment of their supervising social workers to obtain relevant and essential information about

children and young people placed with them. This confidence is reinforced with children and young people's files showing regular communication from the agency to the placing social workers. Social workers' comments include 'Supervising social workers are on the ball' and, 'Foster carers are very proactive in advocating.' However not all young people have a care plan provided by the placing authority.

Agency placement plans are detailed and in place for all children and young people using the fostering service. Children's placements are regularly reviewed and foster carers attend and provide reports for reviews. Foster carers confidently act as advocates, regularly seeking the views of children and young people and championing their rights.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Children and young people say they are safe and feel secure. Their welfare is promoted and they are protected from abuse. Children and young people say they are listened to. The majority identified being able to talk to and share their concerns with foster carers as a key strength in their placements.

The Registered Manager maintains effective relationships with the Local Safeguarding Children team. Relationships between the agency, foster carers and social workers are positive and proactive. This results in a significant impact on safeguarding outcomes for children, young people and their families. For example sibling groups have been placed together on emergency placements and safe family contact is effectively arranged to meet the needs of children and their families.

The recruitment and vetting of staff and foster carers is good. Children and young people are safeguarded as a result of safe and robust recruitment practice and procedures. All individuals have correct checks including employment history, background checks, references and vetting checks. As a result, the agency is satisfied that all individuals are appropriate and safe to work with vulnerable children and young people.

Children and young people grow up in a safe fostering environment due to household health and safety audits. Comprehensive risk assessments are also carried out on each individual child. Risks inside and outside the home are closely examined and effectively managed. Indeed incidents regarding risk taking behaviours by children and young people are very few.

All fostering households have a safe caring policy adapted to the needs of the child. Accidents to children and young people who are fostered are recorded and monitored. Overall, accidents are relatively low. This is attributed to the safe management of risks and a proactive approach to accident prevention.

Information and procedures regarding the prevention of young people going missing are in place. Staff and foster carers are clear about their roles, responsibilities and

the protocols for reporting concerns. There are no incidents of young people going missing from home.

Safeguarding is placed at the centre of all foster carers' assessment, training, matching and supervision. Consequently foster carers present an excellent understanding of the backgrounds, complexities and needs of the children and young people they foster. This knowledge, reinforced with good training and strong support from the agency provides secure and safe care to children and young people.

Children and young people do not raise concerns about bullying. They have clear confidence and self-belief that their foster carers and also teachers will always take seriously any concern they may raise. Children and young people quickly develop positive self-esteem and a sense of safety in their foster families. As a result, they are more empowered in their relationships and confident that necessary steps will be taken to stop bullying. This ensures that bullying is not allowed to become a serious problem.

The procedures for handling allegations are good. Over the past 12 months there has been one allegation related to foster carers. The Registered Manager maintains close liaison with the local safeguarding team; providing effective feedback in order to quality assure positive working in partnership across agencies.

## **Leadership and management**

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

Leaders and managers deliver good outcomes for children and young people. The impact and outcomes of the agency's fostering placements influences and delivers improvement for children and young people.

Leaders and managers bring significant experience and knowledge to the agency. There are high levels of confidence in the leadership of the Registered Manager and the Registered Person. The vision to place the stability and security of children and young people at the centre of the service is shared throughout the agency. Social workers' comments include; 'The child really is the focus of the work and the carers are there to complete whatever needs to be done in order to make sure that the children are OK, happy and achieving' and the service, 'Go over and above what they need to.'

This vision equally ensures that foster carers are well respected, valued and viewed as integral to the success of the agency. They see themselves as part of the team working with the child and sharing responsibility with other key professionals in the child's life. Foster carers are provided with the right support and training to undertake their role effectively. As a result, children and young people are being provided with a safe and caring foster family.

The agency employs enough staff to carry out the role of the fostering service. All the supervising social workers employed at the agency are qualified with extensive

experience, including fostering. Staff value the training and development offered by the agency.

The registered person maintains comprehensive and robust monitoring processes across the operation of the service. An annual report reviewing the quality of the service is yet to be submitted to Ofsted. The Registered Manager and staff team have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the agency. The agency has built firm foundations in the recruitment and retention of foster carers. This secure base results in stable placements for children and young people. There have been no disruptions to any placements in the agency.

Quality assurance is beginning to embed into the organisation of the agency. Good progress is now being made to implement and monitor the agency's quality assurance programme. A service development plan is in its infancy and clearly linked to the organisation's monitoring outcomes.

Children and young people are not yet integral to the monitoring and development of the operation fostering service. This is mainly due to the service having been in operation for less than a year. However, there are clear strategies in place to harness the provider's commitment to placing children and young people's views central to the service.

For example, the Registered Manager and the local authority participation officer meet regularly. Strategies to support more user involvement, facilitate membership to the Care Council and to develop a peer mentoring scheme for children and young people are at a significant stage of development. This strategic and well-planned approach to participation is exemplified with Looked After Children being involved in the recruitment of supervising social workers to the fostering agency.

As the agency develops, some shortfalls regarding the update of the Statement of Purpose have emerged; including the most up to date address for Ofsted. The Registered Manager and support staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the need to notify significant events to the relevant agencies. Records are detailed and show good accountability for safeguarding children and young people. Not all records as sent by the agency have been received by Ofsted. The agency updated postal and secure email arrangements to address these matters during the inspection.

## **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 the inspection of independent fostering agencies.