

# Hillcrest Care Ltd - Orange Grove Fostercare

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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<b>Inspection date</b>	13/03/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Diana Waters
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Domestic adoption

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<b>Registered person</b>	Hillcrest Care Limited
<b>Registered manager</b>	Karen Elizabeth Satchell
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Anthony Raymond Myers
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	06/07/2009

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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Orange Grove Fostercare is an independent fostering service provider. It consists of seven regions and all are registered under their parent company Hillcrest Care Ltd based in Havant, Hampshire. Fostercare head office is based in Malvern, Worcestershire. Orange Grove Fostercare operates registered fostering services across England. The Three Shires regional office is based in Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. It operates with its own Registered Manager and fostering team.

At the time of the inspection the service supports 34 fostering households who care for 43 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 **good**.

The fostering agency has an excellent commitment to improving the lives of children and young people. The outstanding quality of care is provided by dedicated, motivated, trained and competent staff and carers. Children and young people are well matched in stable placements. There is a high quality of support from support workers and supervising social workers. Children and young people report that they are happy and secure in their placements and are positive about the care they receive. The care provided enhances the lives of young people, who with carers support seek to overcome some of the difficulties and challenges they have encountered. They positively work to improve their futures, with targeted support from the service. Young people are at the forefront of improvements and participation is encouraged. A strong management team clearly audits and reviews priorities. Recruitment practice is comprehensive. However, verification of the reason staff left previous employment with vulnerable adults or children has not been applied robustly and a requirement has been made.

## 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
20 (2011)	ensure that recruitment checks include all information listed in Schedule 1; specifically verification, so far as reasonably practicable, of the reason why previous employment with children or vulnerable adults ended. (Regulation 20 (1)(a))	30/04/2013

## Recommendations

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

- promote information contained in the children's guide to enable young people to access advocates and/or children's rights officers. (NMS 16.4)

## Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people make excellent progress and have strong relationships with their carers, their extended families and the services support and social workers. Young people are involved in some decisions about their care and take an increasing responsibility in understanding and accepting their background. They readily share views about their care and their experiences and they influence the development of the service, although current involvement with the recruitment, preparation and training of carers and staff is limited.

Unplanned endings rarely happen, and if they do the process is carefully managed with extra support to enable young people to move in a positive way. Carers report a strong expectation from the service of stick-ability and resilience, one said, 'we are expected to work in a planned way even when there are difficulties and we are encouraged to remain positive to ensure young people feel valued.' Another carer commented, 'young people often remain in touch despite the difficulties we have encountered.'

Children and young people thrive and develop in their placements; experienced and nurturing carers promote their physical and emotional development and have an excellent knowledge about the young people placed with them. Older young people take responsibility for their own health needs. They are supported by their carers to access mainstream services to promote healthy lifestyles; therefore young people enjoy improved health and well-being.

Behaviour management has a high profile in this service, with good access to specialist psychological help. This results in improvements for young people across all aspects of their lives,

Education is a high priority for the service. The service is able to clearly evidence young people's educational attendance and progress. Young people achieve well from their starting points. Educational achievement is promoted and extra help is available to promote learning for young people who may have experienced significant disruption in their schooling. The education officers provide professional and targeted support to carers. This is valued by carers to enable them to facilitate young people's appropriate access to education.

The agency regularly involves foster carers, looked after children and foster carers' own birth children in a wide range of events and social activities, including forums and outings. This encourages the strong support network and sense of family which exists within the service.

Young people develop skills in a variety of ways and young people are encouraged to develop age- and stage-appropriate skills within the home. Most young people join in activities in the community that are based on their individual interests. Carers show innovation and skill in accessing activities to suit 'their' children. Young people's participation in activities builds their confidence and resilience. Some young people remain in placement past their school leaving date; negotiations and liaison with local authorities promote this to ensure stability for young people. Young people often remain in touch with carers after leaving care and this contact is a reflection of the quality of relationships and trust that has developed over time.

### **Quality of service**

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

Carers provide young people with an excellent level of care. Clear planning, liaison with local authorities and proactive management ensures an effective strategy to recruit and assess carers. Assessments focus on the skills, experience and aptitude of carers and their capacity to safely care for young people and these are conducted in an effective way. There is a clear process for independent assessors carrying out assessments of carers; all are subject to rigorous checks to ensure they are of a high quality.

The fostering panel has a newly appointed Chair, who is an experienced panel member, and vice chair. Recommendations made by the panel adhere to clear policies and procedures. The panel's composition is chosen from a central list of members in accordance with regulation. Panel members are clear about their remit and their responsibilities. The experience and knowledge and range of expertise among the panel membership ensure a rigorous oversight of the appointment and recruitment of carers. Minutes of panel meetings clearly record the detail of the discussions and issues raised by panel members, and provide evidence that clear

consideration is given to the approvals of carers. Competent recommendations are made for all carers and recommendations made to the agency decision maker are responded to in a prompt manner.

The central placement team and local office ensure the matching process is well formulated and the service liaises effectively with placing authorities, supervising social workers and carers to ensure young people are only offered placements that potentially meet their needs. Carers confirm no pressure is applied to take inappropriate placements and support for more challenging placements is well planned. Carers comment, 'they are given time to think through, discuss and talk to all family members to ensure the potential impact on the whole family is carefully considered.'

Foster carers have access to a range of health, education and psychological services and are enthusiastic to be involved in helping 'their' young people. Carers are well-informed and actively involved in the psychological support provided by the agency. The team approach is supportive and seen as valuable to help meet the needs and improve the lives of looked after children and young people. Young people's physical and psychological health is promoted by a range of medical support services and these promote young people's welfare. Carers report excellent support from support workers, individual supervising social workers and the manager of the service. Carers support groups are held regularly and provide on-going peer support. Carers report they feel a key part of the fostering team. This excellent partnership promotes the confidence and well-being of carers who in turn promote and champion young people's development and progress. The knowledge base among the team about individual young people is outstanding and frequently the support offered from the staff is described as excellent: 'They make us feel we are doing a good job and we feel we are all committed to provide good quality care.' A life story book recently completed for young people is an outstanding example of promoting well-being, keeping memories alive and providing information about their families. The out-of-hours support line for carers provides a range of advice and excellent support.

Young people report positive and significant relationships with their carers. Carers benefit from a range of training opportunities and have access to professionals to help manage and promote positive behaviour. Young people benefit from committed carers who provide them with positive role models and resilient parenting. A young person said: 'We are treated as part of the family, and we do lots of activities, they care about us and we feel at home.'

Carers show sensitivity to age, gender, faith and religious beliefs incorporating their view that they treat each individual young person as unique and valued. At the heart of the fostering service is the aim to meet the needs of each individual young person within a family and young people confirm this is successful.

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

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

Recruitment, assessment, preparation and supervision of carers focus suitably on safeguarding measures but allow young people to take age/stage appropriate risks. Carers understand the impact of neglect and abuse. Specific training and sessions with the psychologist helps to define techniques and ways of supporting young people that produce positive outcomes for them. Staff are proactive in learning about new and emerging trends on the sexual exploitation of young people and have specialist training booked as they endeavour to keep young people safe. Young people are confident of a proactive response if they report bullying and provide examples of carers' interventions. Young people also readily identify people they would confide in if they wished to complain and gave examples if they were concerned. The agency 24/7 helpline is available for all young people. Information is available in the children's guide for young people to access advocates and /or children's rights officers; however this had not been actively promoted. Agency plans and reviews are held of young people's files and regular meetings positively address issues identified. Allegations are handled appropriately, sensitively and thoroughly. The service subscribes to the 'Fostering Network' for the carer's first year of fostering which offers support for carers in the event of an allegation against them.

Staff recruitment checks are undertaken centrally. Vetting procedures are comprehensive in most areas. However, verification of the reason staff left previous employment with vulnerable adults or children has not been applied robustly.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The performance and delivery of the fostering service is well monitored and regularly reported on to managers of the organisation. This ensures that the level of care that fostered children receive is scrutinised regularly by managers and senior management. There are plans in place that identify areas the service wants to develop and improve upon. Establishing priorities and improvements are a core task and high standards are demanded. Staff confirm that the audit trail ensures they are clear about the tasks required without compromising the quality of support given to carers and young people. Workers confirm a positive working environment where they are managed carefully and supported to develop their skills. Children and young people's voices are increasingly heard in developing the service and they enjoy positive relationships with workers in the service. The Statement of Purpose and children's and young people's guides are comprehensive and regularly updated.

The social work and administrative staff appointed are enthusiastic, competent, trained, supervised and well-supported. Support to staff is accessible and responsive. It is provided on a formal and informal basis and peer support is strong. Appraisals of social workers and the managers take place at least annually. The Registered Manager of the service is a professionally qualified, registered social worker who has several years of experience in childcare management and a recent appropriate management qualification. These high levels of support and management ensure that children receive excellent quality care from carers whose work is supervised by dedicated and skilled professionals.

Foster carers state that the support they receive from the agency is 'brilliant' and 'There is always someone to talk to,' and 'everyone in the office is interested and cares about us, our families and the children placed with us.' Foster carers' support group meetings and on-going training is well attended, further ensuring that children are cared for by informed and professional carers who contribute to the development of the service. The Statement of Purpose is clearly written, and regularly updated; it describes, in detail, the service's aims and objectives. The children's guide is available in two different formats and is accessible and inclusive for children of differing abilities. There are many helpful contact details. There are numerous social events for young people, carers and carers children which are a highlight for many and enjoyed by all who regularly attend.

The two recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. This has resulted in a positive improvement in the service for young people who are fostered.



## 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.