

Shine Fostering

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Setting address	Suite 2, 109 George Lane, Southwoodford, London, E18 1AN
Telephone number	07957308089
Email	khush@shinefostering.co.uk
Registered person	Shine Fostering
Registered manager	Samantha Grenardo
Responsible individual	Khushbir Green
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Service information

Brief description of the service

Shine Fostering Agency is an Independent Fostering Agency, founded in 2012. It is a private company working in partnership with local authorities, providing foster placements for looked after children and young people.

The fostering agency provides short-term and permanency placements, parent and child and emergency placements. Additional to this planned respite care.

At the time of this inspection visit the agency had three approved foster carers and five children and young people placed.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: An agency demonstrating and exceeding the characteristics of a good judgement where children and young people are making significantly better progress and achieving more than was expected in all areas of their lives.

Good: An agency where children and young people, including those with the most complex needs, have their individual needs met and their welfare safeguarded and promoted. They make good progress and receive effective services so they achieve as well as they can in all areas of their lives.

Requires improvement: An agency that may be compliant with regulations and observing the national minimum standards but is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. It therefore requires improvement to be good. There may be failures to meet all regulations or national minimum standards but these are not widespread or serious; all children's and young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate: An agency where there are widespread or serious failures which result in children and young people not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome: **good**.

This is a good fostering agency that provides a quality service to children and foster carers. The agency is fairly new, however, a real strength of the agency is the individualised support provided to children and the drive of the management team to improve outcomes for children. This means that their needs are met and they are making good progress.

There is good support for carers. Most foster carers say the support they receive is good. One said that their supervising social worker is flexible and always available I

don't feel on my own.' The safety of children is paramount.

There is sound and effective leadership and management. Leaders have aspirations for children and this helps to drive progress. There is a motivated staff team who have the skills and experience required to provide an excellent service. The agency shares quality relationships with partner agencies and as a result children receive the care they need.

Areas of improvement identified relate to regular monitoring of the service, to have in place a policy on parent and child arrangements and shared rooms. To obtain effective view of children and have a clear development plan for foster carers. However, none of these shortfalls identified have had an adverse effect on the service provided to children.

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 that children understand how their views have been taken into account and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that in the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom. If this is not possible, the sharing of a bedroom is agreed by each child's responsible authority and each child has their own area within the bedroom. Before seeking agreement for the sharing of a bedroom, the fostering service provider takes into account any potential for bullying, any history of abuse or abusive behaviour, the wishes of the children concerned and all other pertinent facts. The decision making process and outcome of the assessment are recorded in writing where bedroom sharing is agreed (NMS 10.6)
- ensure when arrangements are made by the local authority for a parent and child to live together with foster carers, for example to enable a parenting assessment to be undertaken, the responsible authority must take particular care to clarify the nature of the arrangement. If both the parent (under the age of 18) and child are looked after children, both will be foster placements, but it is also possible that looked after status will only apply to either the child or the parent. In whichever circumstance, it will be necessary to clarify the respective roles of the foster carer and the parent in relation to the child. If neither the parent nor the child is a looked after child the arrangements will not be covered by the 2011 Regulations, but the fostering service should be mindful of the additional responsibilities of the foster carer, any additional skills, training and support the carer may require, and any additional insurance considerations. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4:Fostering Services 2.14)
- ensure that foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake on-going training and development that is appropriate to

their development needs and experience (NMS 20.5)

- ensure that written reports on the management, outcomes and financial state of the fostering service every 3 months; monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children; and satisfy themselves that the provider is complying with the conditions of registration (NMS 25.7)

Experiences and progress of, and outcomes for, children and young people

Judgement outcome: **good**.

The outcomes for children are good. Children thrive within nurturing environments which centre on their individuality and need. There are good mutual respectful relationships between children, foster carers and the agency. Children spoken are satisfied with the agency and their foster carers. Children enjoy being a part of a family and placements are relatively stable with disruption rates are low.

Children are positive about their foster homes and how they are cared for. Children spoken to said their foster carers understood their needs, they are fair and kind, and have helped them to settle fairly quickly into to their new home life which they appreciate.

Children's care plans are robust and are clearly understood by all supporting them. There are clear plans in place for their future and children feel safe and secure. Children have developed positive attachments and there are plans for them to remain with their foster carers for as long as they need the care and support.

Children are able to maintain contact with their families and other significant people. The fostering agency and foster carers actively facilitates contact with families. Children benefit from a good family life and sharing special events with their birth families. Some children are able to live with their brothers and sisters therefore, maintaining a family bond.

Children have a wide range of opportunities and support to help them achieve the best possible outcomes they want. They are able to pursue hobbies, interests and talents and the majority participate in leisure activities after school, supported by their foster carers. Therefore, they are able to gain a range of other interests, opportunities and experience.

Children have the opportunity to express their wishes, feelings and views. They understand how to complain and do have access to independent advice and support through the children's champion. However, the children's champion is in its initial stages of implementation, therefore, children have not been able to appropriately influence the agency and get their voices heard clearly.

Children lead healthy lifestyles. They make good progress with their physical and emotional health as a result of effective therapeutic and psychological help they

receive. They receive good support for their health and well-being and are actively engaged in every aspect of their healthcare. They know why decisions are made and understand how they can contribute to any decision about their health. There are good links with the therapeutic services if needed but this is rarely used. All children are registered with health professional once they move in and this is supported by their carer.

The attainment and educational needs of children are good. Children benefit from attending educational provision which meets their needs. Attendance levels of the children currently placed is 90% and above, although, the majority of the placements are fairly new. Foster carers have established positive working relationships with schools and also with those children who may need additional support. Children are making good progress with their education attainment levels, taking into account their needs and their starting points.

Quality of service

Judgement outcome: **good**.

All those involved with the fostering agency are happy with the service they receive. For example, they agreed that the management team is strong, and that communication between the fostering agency, foster carers and other professionals is good. The management team is also flexible. Foster carers stated that they have a good relationship with the management team and they are always contactable.. Foster carers appreciate the support and guidance they received from the agency and commend them on this.

The fostering agency has a small range of foster carers, who meet the diverse needs of the children, and young people placed with them. The agency is in the process of successfully obtaining tenders from different London Boroughs and the numbers of enquires to foster is increasing. The agency undertakes all marketing, assessment and support for prospective foster carers prior to their approval being decided by the fostering panel. Assessments are undertaken by the supervising social workers who commented that if they have any queries with regards to any assessment this is addressed fairly quickly. Foster carers induction into care includes them having a better understanding of their role and those of the local authority and the fostering agency. Foster carers commented that the initial assessment process was good, a bit intrusive, but necessary.

The agency is aware that there are gaps in training to ensure those carers who undertake additional or specialist care are appropriately trained and skilled. Some foster carers have achieved the Children Workforce Development Council training with their previous fostering agency. Those new to fostering are undertaking the development standards in foster care and are set to pass fairly soon. However, training portfolios of carers provided limited information on their current up to date training and skills.

The panel members have all been recruited from a range of diverse backgrounds,

knowledge and expertise. The majority of the panel members are independent. The decision maker is the Registered Provider. The panel chair, has many years of experience working within local and independent fostering services and has kept abreast with all the current legislative changes within fostering such as the new framework for inspecting independent fostering agencies. The panel is fairly new and part of the induction for members was to attend training to familiarise themselves with the current legislation and get to know each others strengths.

Matching risk assessments are undertaken once a referral is made. This highlights any risk and additional support needed. Where transracial placements are made any identified gaps in terms of support and aids are explored and planned for. Therefore the chances of the success of a placement are maximised. The service recognises the value of establishing clear assessments to give children and young people the clarity they crave about remaining in home and being settled.

The fostering agency works with the child's social worker to ensure that the care plans are reviewed and additional meetings are held at any time to prevent disruption in the placement. However, where brothers and sisters share bedrooms, there were no clear procedures to ensure all safeguarding measures are explored with the child and the carer prior to being placed ensuring that the placement remains safe for each child.

Safeguarding children and young people

Judgement outcome: **good**.

Children and young people feel safe and are safe. They benefit from effective safeguards to ensure that unsuitable people do not have unsupervised contact with them. The agency has a clear understanding of effective practice, in relation to disclosures of abuse by children and young people. There are clear systems in place to support this. Training and written guidance provide carers and staff up-to-date information on safeguarding procedures. The agency is sourcing additional support in this field by employing a safeguarding officer who will be able to monitor this part of the service effectively for the safety and needs of the children placed. Therefore, the fostering agency puts child protection at the centre of all it does.

Foster carers have a clear understanding of the potential impact of abuse and neglect on a child or young person. Where there are concerns the agency along with the carer and the social worker have developed clear safeguarding packages to support the child effectively.

The service has good arrangements for safeguarding children. Foster carers' training covers all areas of child protection. They fully understand the potential impact of abuse on children, and how they are to protect them. The impact of this has been that children's safety and welfare has been promoted.

Children know how to complain, and feel able to do so. They know who they can talk to about any concerns they have. The agency has a child champion to enable

children to have a voice in the agency; however, this support is fairly new and is in its initial stages of developing.

The agency has good relationships with the placing authority, and has made links with the local police. Therefore, the agency has a good understanding of the risk children may place themselves in and this helps the agency to ensure all safeguarding measures are reviewed and monitored where appropriate to safeguard all children placed.

Foster cares, commented that the recruitment, assessment, preparation training had a strong focus on safeguarding and child protection. Therefore, they were able to put the training into practice straightaway, when liaising with the placing authority on concerns they may have had.

There were no incidences of children or young people going missing at the time of this inspection. However, the agency and foster carers have a good understanding of the local protocols on missing persons and what actions is to take to minimise all associated risks.

Leadership and management

Judgement outcome: **requires improvement.**

Many aspects of leadership and management are sound. The management team work well together for the needs of the children. They have a clear understanding of the needs of the agency. Having a group of the foster carers, who understand their roles and responsibilities, enhances this. The management team know the strength of the agency and where improvements are to be made such as; having clear records of on-going training for foster carers and to obtain children's views effectively, although, at the time of this inspection some information was in place, the impact could not yet be fully measured.

The agency is effectively managed and staffed by people who have relevant qualifications, experience and knowledge. Agency staff are enthusiastic, skilled and experienced. There is efficient administration. Staff work in unison to ensure the best interests of children are widely promoted.

The Statement of Purpose and children's guide efficiently outline what the service provides and what children can expect from it. However, the Statement of Purpose does not clearly state how the agency manages any parent and child arrangements.

The annual quality and performance data was completed. However, the information presented was brief. The report did not provide a qualitative overview of the agency since registration, as to what has been improved and where improvement can be made, with regards to providing good outcomes for children. With regards to the quarterly reports linked to the annual data report these have not been undertaken, therefore the overall monitoring of the service has not been managed effectively.

The management team have developed an effective working relationship with the different placing authorities. This has mainly been in relation to foster carers transferring from other fostering agencies with children in placed. Therefore ensuring any transition plan has had minimal impact on the children and young people within the placement. There have been clear safeguard measures and the process has been smooth for both carer and child. The fostering agency has taken specific actions to meet any complex needs and maintain effective working relationships to improve the care, progress, and outcomes of the children placed.

The management monitoring of the quality of the service has not been fully completed. The report does not effectively review the needs of the children, their parents, foster carers and other stakeholders. As a result there is no clear outcome within the report which evidences what are the agency's directions on continuous improvement. The management team are aware this is not reflected effectively and are in the process to improve this area.

Staff and the panel members are appropriately qualified, experienced and supervised. The agency is well staffed, resourced and financially viable. Staff receive regular and relevant training that enables them to supervise and support foster carers. Foster carers describe supervising social work staff as, 'fantastic and supportive'. Staff receive regular supervision and training that contributes to their professional competence.

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, to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards and to support services to improve.

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.