

# Talawa Fostering Services

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC064929
<b>Inspection date</b>	01/02/2016
<b>Inspector</b>	Miss Graovac
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	

---

<b>Setting address</b>	319 Baker Street, ENFIELD, Middlesex, EN1 3LF
------------------------	---

<b>Telephone number</b>	020 83676555
<b>Email</b>	janlord@talwafostering.com
<b>Registered person</b>	Talawa Fostering Services Limited
<b>Registered manager</b>	Ms Jannette Lord
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Ms Lovett Akutu
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	22/02/2013

---

© Crown copyright 2016

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

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 privately owned agency offers 31 foster placements in 16 fostering households. Seventeen children are currently in placement. The agency provides a range of placements from short-term to mother and baby through to long-term and permanence. The agency did not approve any new households in the last 12 months.

### 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**

The agency is effective at recruiting genuinely caring, highly skilled and emotionally robust foster carers. Through high quality supervision, support and training, the agency enables foster carers to meet children's needs and achieve positive outcomes. The agency provides placements in fostering families that successfully nurture children's uniqueness, identity, talents and learning, and by doing so, maximise their life-chances.

Children have very positive experience of being fostered. They enjoy having a good family life. They form close relationships and appropriate attachments. Children experience stability and develop a sense of belonging. From feeling safer and more secure, they become more open to learning and change. Children become more able to articulate their feelings and engage better with support and help from the agency and other services. They feel heard, valued and helped. In the protective and positive family environment, they thrive and blossom, making good and in some instances, excellent progress across different aspects of their welfare and development.

Carers successfully advocate for children. The agency works in effective partnership with other professionals to help children to address any barriers to their progress.

The leaders and managers carry out their roles with great integrity and professional expertise. They set high standards and closely monitor the service. The agency's insightful, emotionally intelligent and robust fostering practice underpins children's good outcomes. The views of children, carers, staff and other professionals influence the agency's developments. The areas for further improvement relate to staff appraisals, notifications sent to Ofsted and embedding more systematic quality assurance processes.

## Areas of 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.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate appraisal. (Regulation 21.(4)(a))	01/05/2016
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in	01/03/2016

respect of the event in column 2 of the table. This in particular relates to notifying Ofsted without delay of any serious complaint about any foster parent approved by the fostering agency and of an instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed with foster parents. (Regulation 36(1) Schedule 7)	
---	--

## Recommendations

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

Improve the procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service and embed an effective systems for more detailed tracking of children's outcomes. (NMS 25.2)

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

Judgement outcome: **Good**

Children have very positive experience of being fostered through this agency. The sensitively managed admission process and the foster families' wholeheartedly welcoming attitudes have helped children to settle with ease into their new homes.

Children receive highly individualised and effective care that meets their needs. They feel listened to, accepted and valued for who they are. The agency promotes children's identity and supports them very well to achieve their potential.

Having access to a wide range of opportunities and professional help enables children to achieve positive outcomes across different aspects of their welfare. In particular, they receive excellent emotional support that enhances their psychological health and wellbeing. They receive advice on healthy living and develop healthy lifestyles. They have nutritious meals and enjoy the pleasure of eating together as a family, in an orderly atmosphere. They try various sports and through this, learn about their bodies, self-discipline and teamwork. The examples of good progress that children have made in relation to health include significant improvement in their health conditions, such as eczema and asthma. Children who used to have frequent nightmares and scream throughout the night now enjoy having comfortable and uninterrupted sleep.

Taking into account their starting points, some children have made dramatic improvements in their school attendance, engagement and attainments. An example of this is a child whose school attendance has increased from 62% to 100%. Children overall make good educational progress with some of them achieving better than expected. An educational professional commented how foster carers were brilliant at consolidating children's learning at home and that the foster children were flourishing academically.

Children have excellent opportunities for extra-curricular learning. They engage in a wide range of recreational and fun activities. They enjoy going on holidays abroad with their foster families. Children develop their confidence, interests and creativity and achieve better social integration. They dream 'big' and receive support to take proactive steps to achieve their dreams.

Experiencing a good family life has a strong positive impact on children's feelings, in particular on their inner sense of safety, self-worth and self-belief. A child wrote in the Ofsted online survey 'I love my foster mum. I like living in this home because I feel safe'. A young care leaver said that the agency helped her to open a new door to herself. One child summed up what makes him happy in the placement, as 'I am now a normal child with a normal family.'

Children remain with their foster families as long as they need it. They experience stability and develop a sense of belonging. Adoptions and special guardianship arrangements have brought some long-term placements and secure attachments

onto a different level.

The agency prepares children well for responsible citizenship and independent living. Foster families tell young care leavers that their door is always open for them.

## Quality of service

Judgement outcome: **Outstanding**

The agency conducts every aspect of the fostering service with thoroughness, rigour and a sharp focus on children. The professional practice exceeds the characteristics of a good judgement and results in consistently positive outcomes for children.

Excellent preparation to foster, highly analytical assessments of prospective foster families and a strong fostering panel mean that only high quality carers are approved. Once approved, foster carers continue to receive excellent support and comprehensive training. This includes having access to enhanced psychological support and advice from psychotherapists who work for the agency.

This is an emotionally intelligent agency that consistently promotes emotional awareness, self-regulation and resilience, on all its levels of functioning. Linked with this, is the agency's culture of promoting non-judgemental attitudes and celebrating equality and diversity in all its forms.

Educational and social care professionals commented that foster carers treated looked after children as if they were their own sons and daughters. Regardless of children's complex needs and at times, challenging behaviours and presentations, foster carers see the uniqueness and potential of each child. They have high aspirations for children. They are excellent advocates and make sure that the child's voice is always heard. They talk about the looked after children with genuine affection. In addition to having a great capacity to understand and love children, they also have comprehensive skills and fostering competences to help children to move their lives forward.

Foster families highly value the support they receive from their supervising social workers. They described the agency as absolutely brilliant, fantastic and fabulous. They said that the agency was always there for them and that they could have not hoped for a better support. A foster carer said: 'The agency values us as people. There is no great divide: it is all about us working together for the positive outcomes of the children.'

The feedback that Ofsted received from a wide range of professionals through our online survey and conversations during the inspection was also unanimously very positive. The professionals said that the agency was always going the extra mile to enable the carers to improve children's life-chances. They described the agency as an

impressive and outstanding service. An educational professional said that the carers and children received phenomenal amount of support from the agency.

One of the things that the agency excels in is the stability of the placements. The agency reported no unplanned endings for the year 2014/15, which is well below the national average figure. Specific approval criteria and excellent matching decisions make significant contributions to the high effectiveness of the placements. Foster carers said that the agency knew them very well on a very deep level and were able to predict which placements would work well for everybody involved. One foster carer noted that matching took into account the carer's personal emotional histories, attachment styles and family dynamics.

The agency views foster family life holistically. While emphasising the outcomes for foster children, the agency makes sure that each family member receives the support they need in order to continue to successfully carry out their roles and to continue to enjoy a good family life. Foster carers described the agency as being respectful and deeply human. They said that fostering has been a positive journey for the whole family and has enriched their lives.

The meticulous records of regular monthly supervisory visits and the comprehensive annual reviews demonstrate that the agency's social work practice is insightful and reflective. The robust fostering panel's considerations of the assessments and reviews contribute to the exceptionally high standard of professional practice being maintained.

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

Judgement outcome: **Good**

Rigorous recruitment practice ensures that all people working for the agency are suitable for their roles. Comprehensive training, clear safeguarding procedures and excellent fostering practice with a firm focus on safeguarding ensures that the agency operates a safe fostering service. Transparency, open communication and non-judgemental attitudes strengthen safeguarding practice further.

Foster carers are able to form trusting relationships and strong bonds with the looked after children. They recognise the impact that the past experiences have had on the children. They are aware of the children's vulnerabilities and open to any disclosures that they might make. They are effective at helping children to develop a secure base from which they can safely explore difficult experiences that they had. The trust that they will not be judged and that they will be actively helped has enabled children to share their concerns, worries and difficult feelings. A child's social worker said that the foster carers were amazing at being able to emotionally hold the child who was making significant disclosures about the tremendous abuse that he had previously experienced. Children receive good support from the carers to face their past, develop their resilience, be aware of any current risks and adopt safer behaviours. Foster families receive therapeutic advice and bespoke behaviour



management support to respond most effectively to challenging behaviours. They make a conscious effort to understand the personal meaning that these behaviours have for the children and the emotional message that they convey. They are effective at helping children to safely bring into awareness the deep-rooted issues that trouble them and to find more constructive ways of dealing with these issues.

The agency works in close partnership with other services, such as social services, schools, health and the police to consistently implement any risk management plans and strategies to safeguard children and promote their welfare. Children experience consistent firm boundaries and good emotional support. As a result, they feel safer and more confident than before. Their understanding of how to protect themselves has increased. Their behaviour has improved. They are less likely to engage in risk-taking, destructive and criminal behaviours. For example, a child with serious criminal convictions is doing wonderfully well in his placement. He is attending college and growing into a polite and kind young man who is now thinking how he could help other children to turn their lives around. A teacher commented that a child who used to frequently exhibit highly challenging behaviours in the classroom was now calm and a pleasure to be around. Another educational professional said that the children have made exceptional progress in their social skills and behaviour since being fostered.

The agency's safeguarding practice has been effective at promoting children's safety. Hardly any safeguarding incidents have occurred. Children do not go missing. There are no concerns of child sexual exploitation, involvement with gangs and negative relationships, radicalisation, bullying or female genital mutilation.

In partnership with other services, the agency has appropriately addressed any concerns, complaints or allegations that have been made against the foster carers. While always putting safeguarding children first, the agency has good arrangements in place for the carers to receive independent support and advocacy when they are subject of an allegation.

## Leadership and management

Judgement outcome: **Good**

A suitably qualified and highly experienced Registered Manager has been at the helm of the agency since it registered in 2005. She has led the fostering service with compassion, integrity and professionalism for over 10 years. She has gained the full confidence of her staff and foster families, including looked after children. The whole team shares a clear vision of values-imbued service delivery of the highest standard and a child-centred approach. Participation and meaningful engagement of the whole staff team, foster carers and children are high. Foster carers describe the agency as a big happy family.

The agency has built excellent links with partner agencies and has a good reputation within the sector. It works well together with others to address any obstacles to children's progress and promote positive outcomes. The manager appropriately

challenges other services to always do what is best for children and is open to being challenged in that way herself.

The manager closely monitors the quality and the effectiveness of the service through regular team meetings, individual staff supervision, annual reviews of foster carers and direct contact with children. The agency's high quality record keeping and efficient office management systems underpin good monitoring. The leaders and managers also meet on a regular basis to discuss any trends and plan for the future. They consult with the placing authorities about their needs and forthcoming projects. They clearly contribute to joint local planning. The agency's quarterly and annual business reviews inform the marketing strategy and confirm financial viability.

The leaders and managers have excellent knowledge of the agency as a whole and of each child. In order to more systematically capture children's progress, they have recently introduced an outcome tracker form for individual children. Further work needs to be done to embed formal monitoring systems that are in place, such as having a more detailed analysis of the information available on the data-base.

Another area for further improvement relates to sending notifications of all significant events to Ofsted in a timely manner and with sufficient detail. The agency was able to address this requirement during the inspection. The leaders and managers always submit other data, such as annual quality and performance data returns to Ofsted, promptly.

The agency needs to be better at ensuring that all staff including the manager have their performance formally reviewed on at least an annual basis.

The agency's weaknesses have not had a negative impact on the quality of care that children receive and the outcomes that they achieve. The agency is already taking specific measures to address the gaps. Their first step is recruiting a deputy manager and a senior social worker to increase the management capacity.

---

## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to inform 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 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.