

Pyramid Care CIC Fostering

Pyramid Care Community Interest Company
The Cupola, Cupola Court, Spetchley, Worcestershire WR5 1RL
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Pyramid Care Community Interest Company was established in March 2012, and the fostering element was subsequently added in November of that year. It is a non-profit making organisation based on the outskirts of Worcester. The fostering service offers a number of different types of placements for children and young people. These include emergency and unplanned placements, respite placements, long-term placements, specialist placements for children who have disabilities, and parent and child placements. The agency has nine approved foster carers with nine children placed.

Inspection dates: 25 to 29 September 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 6 June 2014

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is outstanding because:

- Children make excellent progress and blossom because of the care that they receive from their carers.
- Children enjoy a variety of positive, life-enriching activities. They benefit from play therapy and sensory processing work that is designed for children who are overly sensitive due to trauma.
- Children's achievements are celebrated.
- The agency adopts creative ways to gain children's views and to ensure that children are at the heart of the agency.
- Staff and foster carers are aspirational for children.
- The registered manager and staff keep up to date with research and implement changes quickly to ensure that children are provided with the best possible care.
- Children's safety is paramount to foster carers and staff. All staff and foster carers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise risk and minimise harm.
- Children's birth families and professionals are exceptionally positive about the agency.
- The registered manager makes sure that staff support and expertise is not restricted to the children that are placed with the agency. For example, staff offer play therapy to siblings and other family members.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are at the heart of this agency. Staff and foster carers are aspirational for all children. Children are treated as unique individuals who have their own needs and personalities. They receive excellent, bespoke care. Children make exceptional and sustained progress from their starting points due to the care and support that they receive. For example, all children are involved in play therapy, either individually or as part of a group. This enhances children's lives, allows them to make mistakes and learn from them, while being gently encouraged to work through and improve their behaviours. Children are encouraged to be children and to develop in line with their cognitive functioning rather than their chronological age, as staff and carers understand the impact of early trauma on children's brains. This helps children to recover from trauma and make significant progress in all areas of their lives, including their education and social skills.

Staff ensure that they keep up to date with research and put this into practice to enhance children's lives. The expertise that staff develop is also extended to children's siblings so that all children's needs are met, regardless of whether they are placed with the agency or not. For example, staff support siblings who do not live together to meet. Children enjoy seeing each other and these sessions include play therapy. Staff have also worked with a grandmother and her grandchild to encourage and build their relationship. As a result, positive familial relationships are preserved and supported to blossom.

Staff pay meticulous attention to the detail of children's lives. A significant strength of the agency is the sensitive and caring culture that staff create. The staff and carers include children in all aspects of their care, especially by using pictures very effectively. This strong child-focused approach helps children to have a clear understanding of what is happening in their lives and how to express their views. The registered manager and staff are innovative in their practice. For example, they translated a formal letter to children which told them about their siblings being adopted, using pictures so that the children would be able to understand. Furthermore, staff undertook individual play therapy sessions with the children so that they were able to understand, from a child's perspective, what adoption is.

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. Foster carers and staff are passionate about the children. They recognise children's idiosyncrasies and understand why behaviours develop. Staff work together in a nurturing, caring manner to manage the impact of such behaviours, rather than trying to control or change children. This, in turn, allows children to express their views and to start to regulate their own behaviour. A placing social worker said, 'He seems really happy, it is the first time he has been shown any warmth. He looks completely different, carrying himself well and is looking confident.'

All of the children are attending school or receiving education. Children who have previously been out of school for a long period are now attending regularly and are doing exceptionally well. An independent reviewing officer's report reads, '[The

child] has made excellent progress since transitioning to secondary school.' Staff rigorously pursue the most appropriate school to meet children's complex needs. A placing social worker stated, 'She has made phenomenal progress... her foster carers advocate for her accordingly. I have observed this particularly within her education setting.' Children benefit from not only academic learning at school, but also the social aspect that it provides. Children's health needs are fully met. Staff are dedicated and work creatively to ensure that children who need to attend hospital appointments understand what it will entail. For example, a child had to attend hospital for a blood test. Staff visited the hospital and wrote a story, talking about the nurse who will complete the blood test and showed a photograph of the nurse. As a result, children are inspired to flourish in all aspect of their lives.

Children enjoy attending a range of activities, either as part of the groups run by the service or individually with their foster carers. Children regularly attend a 'sunshine group', where one-to-one support is given to children who have not experienced positive touch or nurture in their past. The children recently enjoyed a 'Swallows and Amazons' themed activity day where they enjoyed making masks, flags and boats. As a result, children's self-esteem and self-confidence is growing.

Children who move to live with foster carers are prepared as much as possible beforehand. All children receive a 'talking photograph' card with the foster carer's voice telling them how much they are looking forward to welcoming them. For placements which are planned over a period of time, children have a series of introductions with foster carers. When children move on from the agency to residential settings, they continue to attend the activity days. This helps to reduce their anxieties as much as possible.

Foster carers understand how critically important it is for children to benefit from and sustain positive relationships with their family and friends. These relationships provide children with an understanding of their background, heritage and family. A birth mother said, 'I am really happy as he is so settled, he is thriving... Carers text me and have pictures of what he has been up to... Carers have been fantastic... If anything happened to [the child], they would let me know and they still treat me like a mum and not somebody else. I know he is having intense therapy and it has been with the same person.' Photographs and social stories of time spent with family are part of children's life story work. Parents also receive a copy as a keepsake of their time together. Parents value this highly.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Safeguarding children is a high priority for staff and foster carers. Children are parented exceptionally well. This ensures that they are safe and feel safe. Foster carers support the children and do everything that they can to protect them from harm.

Foster carers adapt their parenting styles to meet the age and understanding of each child. Foster carers are provided with a range of excellent training that helps them to understand the nuances of children's behaviour. Children benefit from consistent boundaries that provide them with a sense of security and well-being.

Consequently, children are kept safe at all times.

Staff and foster carers identify adeptly the risks for each child and complete appropriate risk assessments. Foster carers are given all the information that the agency has about the children they care for. Foster carers have all the training and support required to ensure that children are always safeguarded, while expertly balancing this with the need for children to take appropriate risks. Children do not go missing from home and there are no concerns about radicalisation or exploitation. Despite this, staff are well trained and alert to these issues.

The registered manager has acted swiftly and contacted appropriate safeguarding professionals when this has been required. They have worked together to ensure that children's safety and welfare is promoted at all times. The registered manager makes sure that serious safeguarding concerns about carers are referred to the disclosure and barring service. Foster carers, panel members and agency staff are recruited safely. The panel and agency decision-maker demonstrate robust practice when considering approving foster carers. Panel members challenge the agency to ensure that they make appropriate recommendations. The independent reviewing mechanism has supported and agreed with panel decisions when referrals have been made to them.

Dedicated and skilled family support workers (known as link workers) play a key role to help children understand risk and learn how to keep themselves safe. Handbooks and written information enable children to have an understanding of what support they should be receiving and also ensure that they know their rights.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is highly aspirational and leads by example. He has an ambitious vision for the service. All staff and foster carers in the agency have absorbed this ambition and passion. Staff and foster carers are suitably qualified and benefit from excellent training so that they have the knowledge, skills and expertise to meet children's individual and diverse needs. The registered manager has developed a clear learning culture. Staff are supported by both formal and informal supervision. Link workers have the additional benefit of clinical supervision conducted by suitably qualified play therapists. Staff are enthusiastic about their work and demonstrate excellent knowledge of each child's care plan. Staff encourage and support children to be happy, to enjoy new experiences and to progress in all aspects of their lives. Children are clearly at the heart of this organisation and their measurable progress, in all aspects of their lives, is testament to this.

The registered manager has a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. He is ambitious and continually uses feedback from staff, children and stakeholders along with research to develop the service. The registered manager and staff have pioneered new ideas throughout the organisation and are forward-thinking in their practice. For example, they use sensory input assessments to identify children's needs. Children's yoga sessions help children to calm and learn how to balance their behavioural needs with their sensory needs.

The registered manager learns from complaints and incidents and effectively implements alternative ways of working. He will constructively challenge other professionals to ensure that children receive the best possible service while maintaining excellent partnership working. The registered manager maintains excellent monitoring systems that help him to assess the impact of the care and support that children receive. The registered manager is constantly reviewing practice in his determination to improve his service. Staff are extremely proud of the children, their development and progress.

Equality and diversity are discussed continuously. Staff recognise that these issues are bespoke to each child and go beyond the parameters of race, sexuality and disability. Consequently, children receive excellent individually tailored support and the agency is meeting the aims and objectives as outlined in its statement of purpose.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC453308

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Inspector

Sandra King, social care inspector



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