

Coram Anglia Fostering

Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption, trading as Coram Anglia Fostering

1 Lincoln House, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 8DH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a bespoke fostering agency, specialising in early permanence for children under two years of age. The registered office for this service is in Cambridge.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 October 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: This is the first inspection

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection:

None.

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- This is a bespoke fostering service. Every placement is very carefully matched and prepared for.
- The child's welfare is placed firmly at the centre of care planning.
- The staff and managers are very experienced and knowledgeable.
- The number of moves and the impact of any moves during early childhood are greatly reduced.
- The children have the opportunity to experience early attachments with a primary caregiver.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development :

- Ensure that the arrangements for recording and monitoring of the supervision for foster carers are clear and consistent.
- Ensure that there is a consistent approach to training in first aid for carers.
- Ensure that staff training, with specific reference to refresher safeguarding training, incorporates the 'Prevent' duty and the issue of child sexual exploitation.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure foster carers receive sufficient training on health and hygiene issues and first aid. (National minimum standards 6.7)
- Ensure each foster carer's file includes detailed records of supervisory meetings. (National minimum standards 21.8)
- Ensure that there is a good quality learning and development programme. (National minimum standards 23.1) This is with specific reference to refresher safeguarding training for child sexual exploitation and 'Prevent'.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is a bespoke agency which is in its first year of operation. This fostering service contributes to the work of Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption Permanence service, a partnership arrangement between Cambridgeshire County Council and Coram, the children's charity. The partnership was registered with Ofsted as a voluntary adoption agency three years ago to achieve adoption and early permanence for children from Cambridgeshire Local Authority.

Based in the same office as Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption, Coram Anglian Fostering was registered in its own right with Ofsted in January 2017 and began to operate from April 2017. The agency continues to work closely with Cambridgeshire local authority and, going forward, plans to offer a service to neighbouring local authorities. This fostering agency is an early permanence programme and exists to place children aged under two years with carers who have been dually approved to foster and to adopt.

Since April 2017, a small number of families have been approved and a very few children have been placed with their foster carers. The children placed are the subject of care proceedings, and the view of the placing authority is that there is a likelihood that the child will require a permanent placement. The service exists to minimise the number of placement moves during early childhood and to prevent delay in achieving permanence for these children.

Each individual placement is carefully matched, negotiated and planned in advance. This is a specialist service, so the foster carers receive specific and targeted training to help them to understand their responsibilities. The training helps them to manage the uncertainty of the child's situation and also the uncertainty of their role going forward in the child's life. The result for each child is a truly child-centred approach to care planning, because the number of moves and transitions is significantly minimised. For example, some of the children are placed with their foster carers from birth. The foster carers may or may not become their adopters, but the child has the opportunity to make secure attachments from a primary relationship.

The foster carers work closely with the placing local authority to ensure that they meet the requirements for the child's contact with their birth family so, for example, the children are taken to and from contact by their carers. The carers keep written notes about the child, and this information helps the professionals to see when the children reach, or when they do not reach, expected developmental milestones.

The agency makes clear its expectations of dually approved foster carers and adopters. Foster carers receive help to understand the court planning process. The agency explains to the foster carers that they do not have legal rights in relation to the child and do not influence the court decision-making process. This ensures that the adults understand the difference between being a foster carer and an adopter. One carer said, 'The agency has made us fully aware of the uncertainties, and we

know that if this child does return to live with his birth family, 'We have helped to give him the best possible start in life.'

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

The circumstances of each child referred for a service are unique. The team of qualified social workers who lead this service come from the existing cohort of staff employed to deliver the service for Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption. The staff are experienced, and draw on their knowledge and understanding of care planning, legislation and research in both adoption and fostering to set the scene for a professional and organised service. Their collective competence helps them to work with local authority colleagues to identify and plan strategies to reduce any risks for each child, for example in relation to contact arrangements.

The pre-approval process is thorough and robust. Assessments are staged and overseen by the managers, and this ensures that the right couples move forward in the assessment process. Pre-approval training includes the opportunity to meet with and talk to other adults who have experience of this specialist approach to early permanence, and this provides some insight and reassurance for prospective foster carers. There is a clear focus on achieving positive long-term outcomes for every child. One social worker said, 'We are very clear throughout the assessment that this process is about what is best for the child.' This intense approach to the pre-approval process helps to manage prospective carers' expectations. One current carer said, 'When we come through this, I would really like the opportunity to share our experiences with others who are thinking about doing this.'

There have been no complaints or safeguarding matters. The staff and the carers are clear about the process to follow in the event of a concern emerging. All say that they are confident that the leaders and managers are approachable and would be responsive to any issues raised.

Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption and Permanence panel incorporates the assessments presented by Coram Anglia Fostering. This is possible because the panel members on the central list are very experienced and knowledgeable individuals who have a substantial understanding of both fostering and adoption. They make professional recommendations to the agency, and the rationale for recommending dual approval to foster and to adopt is clearly set out in the panel minutes. The panel members provide meaningful feedback to the agency about the quality of the content of the detailed written reports. This process ensures that there is robust scrutiny of and professional curiosity about all assessments presented to panel, and it helps to ensure that only the most suitable individuals are approved by the agency decision maker.

Following approval, foster carers have an allocated worker who remains in contact with them while they wait to be linked with a child or an unborn baby. Foster carers do receive supervision, but records show that there is an inconsistent approach to this arrangement. While this has no current impact on any child, consistent arrangements for delivering and recording carer supervision will help to track discussions and help to prevent any misunderstandings between the agency and the

foster carer.

Foster carers access a range of post-approval training, such as understanding attachment and safeguarding. However, carers are asked to organise their own training for first aid. This means that the organisation's response to ensuring that foster carers understand that they are required to attend first aid training is not yet coordinated sufficiently. This has no impact on any child at this time.

Due to the short length of operation, there have not been any foster carer annual reviews or unannounced visits. Going forward, it is unlikely that any child will be in foster care for over one year but, in this event, the agency is clear that a foster carer review is required. The agency has the resources and infrastructure to ensure that this happens as required by fostering regulations.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is a very experienced social worker and manager. Together, the registered manager and the responsible individual share significant knowledge in the areas of adoption and fostering. Both work from the same base, and so they are in regular communication and discussion with the team about the evolution of this registration within this service.

Feedback from the placing authority is overwhelmingly positive. This agency benefits significantly from the partnership between Coram and Cambridgeshire local authority. This is because staff and managers are using the knowledge and experience gathered since 2014 to build the infrastructure and quality assurance systems for this service.

The service has a named worker with responsibility for developing good practice models in this service. With the support of managers, the worker promotes discussion within the team and ensures that the staff involved in the assessment, preparation, supervision and support of prospective foster carers have access to up-to-date information and resources to influence practice. This ensures a careful, steady and incremental approach to the development of fostering practice.

The staff have good opportunity to access a range of training externally and from within the wider infrastructure of Coram. So, for example, the staff attend courses on reflective supervision, concurrent care planning and supporting contact concurrently. Staff do attend a level 1 safeguarding training course as part of their induction. However, refresher safeguarding courses are not taking place, so those staff who have worked for the organisation for over a year have not had access to training on the issues of child sexual exploitation or 'Prevent' duty. This does not help the staff to remain up to date with current themes in safeguarding.

Social workers' and managers' work is appraised, and all attend regular supervision. These meetings are structured and designed to encourage reflection and to shape workers' thinking about their work with the carers and their families. This ensures that staff focus on how their work influences long-term outcomes for children, which helps to ensure that the work is of a high quality.

The service meets the aims and objectives described in the statement of purpose. The strength of the collaboration with Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption service is now being put to the test by a small number of families who have come to this service to be assessed for a second time. One carer in assessment said, 'We have gone through all of the training again. They have been thorough. We have been fully included in the process and know what to expect. The team has been brilliant.'

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 difference 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: 1247847

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Inspector

Rosie Davie, social care inspector



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