

Family Works Fostering Limited

Suite 18, Business Centre, 8 Madeira Avenue, Leigh-On-Sea, Essex SS9 3EB
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Family Works fostering is a small privately owned independent fostering agency operating from one office based in Southend. The agency provides emergency, short-term, long-term and parent and child placements.

Inspection dates: 4 to 8 December 2017

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: This is the first inspection

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Effective placement matching promotes the children to have stable placement.
- The children benefit from nurturing homes where they blossom. They develop positive relationships with their foster carers.
- The children feel safe and are safe.
- The children develop positive relationships with the agency staff, whom they see regularly.
- Due to the help and support that they receive, the children make good progress within a short time. The children are healthier, progress well at school and grow in confidence, which contributes to their increased self-esteem.
- The agency works well in partnership with the children, parents and other agencies to promote positive outcomes for most of the children.
- Carers feel respected, well supported and highly valued.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Foster carer's terms of approval are not clearly stated in the foster care agreements.
- Panel meeting minutes are not of sufficient quality.
- Recruitment processes do not consistently meet regulatory requirements.
- Approaches to risk management are not always clearly documented and consistently applied.
- Information about the agency and its carers is not always clearly accessible to children, parents and placing authorities.
- Some carers have yet to undertake core training.
- Quality assurance systems contain inappropriate information and on occasion do not reflect the realities in the service.

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

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The registered person must ensure that the fostering panel make a written record of its proceedings and the reasons for its recommendations. (Regulation 24(2))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the minutes of the meeting are of sufficient quality and clarity to document the proceedings effectively and any terms specified in respect of recommendation of approval of a foster carer.</p>	29/01/2018
<p>The registered person must ensure that if the fostering service decides to approve X as a foster parent they must give X notice in writing specifying any terms on which the approval is given. (Regulation 27(5)(a)(b))</p>	29/01/2018
<p>The registered person must recruit staff using recruitment procedures that are designed to ensure children's safety. The registered person must only employ an individual to work in the fostering service when full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20(1)(a)(3)(c))</p>	15/01/2018

Recommendations

- Implement a proportionate approach to risk assessment. (National Minimum Standards 4.5)

In particular, ensure that household safe care guidance is consistent and reflects the particular placement arrangements. Furthermore, ensure that clear written agreements and risk assessments are in place governing the arrangements in respect of potential regular visitors.

- Ensure children are given information about the foster carer before arrival, and any information (including where appropriate, photographic information) they need or reasonably request about the placement, in a format appropriate to their age and understanding. (National Minimum Standards 11.3)

- Ensure the fostering service has a clear statement of purpose which is available to, and understood by, foster carers, staff and children and is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility. (National Minimum Standards 16.1)
- Ensure the children's guide is available in suitable alternative methods of communication, e.g. Makaton, pictures, tape recording, and translation into another language. (National Minimum Standards 16.6)
- Ensure appropriate training is made available to foster carers, including hard to reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. (National Minimum Standards 20.8)

In particular, ensure that all carers undertake appropriate training in first aid, behaviour management, child sexual exploitation and the wider safeguarding agenda.

- Ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes the financial viability of the service, any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the service and ensuring the quality of the service. (National Minimum Standards 25.1)

In particular, ensure that the review of the quality of care is a reflection of the service, does not contain inappropriate personal information and is sufficiently evaluative to drive improvement.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The vast amount of placements are planned and the children have been able to visit carers prior to moving into placement. However, the children do not currently receive introductory information about the carers. This means that opportunities to reduce the children's anxiety when they first meet potential carers are missed.

The effective and well-planned matching arrangements mean that the majority of children live in settled, secure and nurturing environments where they flourish. One teacher said, 'This carer has made a massive difference for the children; they are absolutely blossoming in all aspects of their life.' The children continue to live with their brothers and sisters when appropriate. The well-planned placement arrangements help the children to settle, consequently the children make good progress in their health and well-being. The children benefit from responsive individualised care and as a result, they grow in confidence, independence and maturity, all of which contributes to their improved self-esteem. When asked about living in a fostering household, the children commented:

- 'It's good. It's fun and boring at the same time.'
- 'It's been good because we go to the cinema and do lots of things.'
- 'My carer is nice and kind, there is nothing that I would change.'
- 'They are amazing people, she makes me feel like part of the family.'

The children feel safe and nurtured and their views are sought about the day-to-day decisions in their lives. One young parent described how the carer is able to sensitively help them process and understand what their local authority's expectations are in respect of them as a parent. This is helping this young parent to work towards an optimistic outcome for them and their child. The children like living with their carers and experience confident and capable parenting. The children develop mutually positive relationships with their carers and enjoy new opportunities, such as school discos, visits to the local park, trampoline park and going to major tourist attractions. The carers address any issues that worry the children and raise any relevant concerns with the children's social workers. Professionals refer to competent and committed carers who make a great difference in the children's lives. Their comments include:

- 'The carer understands the children very well. She's very astute to their emotional well-being, non-verbal communication and behaviour. They adore her.'
- 'X [The carer] does everything with a kind heart.'
- 'It's an outstanding placement where the children are really blooming.'

The children regularly attend and engage more fruitfully in education. For example, one group of children have improved their attendance from 40% to 100% since placed. As a result, these children, who were behind age-related targets, are quickly catching up and are developing friendship groups in school. The carers provide daily support to the children, such as helping them read and do their homework. The children say that they 'have fun' and they respond positively to the encouraging attitude of their foster carers. One schoolteacher commented on how the children now have aspirations for their own future, something which had never been previously shown.

The children receive good support to maintain optimum health and are able to access therapeutic services when needed. For example, some of the children have quickly gained weight through good nutrition, received all their vaccinations and have improved dental care. When there are concerns regarding potential underlying health conditions, carers ensure that the children attend all appointments to guarantee that these are fully explored. The children are supported in developing independence and self-care skills appropriate to their age. Young parents are well supported to develop their skills and knowledge of their child's needs; consequently, they demonstrate improved parenting capacity. One young parent said, 'It's brilliant. My carer is very kind and helpful, she shows me what to do and how to be a better mum.'

This small, new agency has been successful in recruiting carers from minority backgrounds. This has facilitated matching of children with carers of similar cultural and religious heritage. This means that the children continue to enjoy the comforting cultural routines and spiritual aspects of their lives that are important to them. For example, one child said, 'I love to go to church. We sing and dance and have fun, and we go to a restaurant to have breakfast.'

New carers are welcomed, prepared and assessed effectively. Carers work positively in partnership with other professionals to promote the children's well-being. The agency provides practical support to help carers to meet the particular needs of the children. For example, the agency currently funds some children's daily taxi journeys to facilitate their frequent family contact and to ensure that they are able to remain at their regular school.

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

The manager knows each of the children and their individual risks. However, on occasion, household safe care policies are contradictory or not clear. For example, one carer's case file contained safe care guidelines that did not correlate with the copy held on the children's files; on another occasion, the safe care guidelines did not reflect particular placement complexities. Furthermore, there was no documented agreement or risk assessment in respect of a regular visitor for one carer. Although these specific risk management arrangements require tightening in order to prevent potential risk, there has been no negative effect and no evidence to suggest that any child has been placed at risk.

The children feel safe and well protected. The manager currently meets regularly with the children in placement and the children say that they would talk to him if they were unhappy about their carer. There have been no significant incidents, such as incidents of physical restraint or occasions when children have gone missing. The carers have clear guidance and are aware of how to respond to such situations. The consistent boundaries applied and routines, such as hot chocolate and reading at bedtime, contribute to a feeling of well-being and security for most of the children. As a result, professionals report distinct improvements in children's behaviour.

The carers have a sound awareness of safeguarding practice and know what to do should they identify any concerns. However, most carers have yet to undertake training and awareness raising in respect of wider safeguarding issues, such as child sexual exploitation, gang affiliation and preventing radicalisation. When carers do not have detailed awareness of possible indicators of concern, this has the potential to undermine their ability to identify children at risk; consequently, such children may not receive timely and effective intervention.

Vetting procedures for panel members and agency staff are generally robust. However, there is not sufficient scrutiny to ensure that on each and every occasion all recruitment is conducted in accordance with regulatory requirements or best practice. For example, on one occasion a criminal records check was carried out at a standard level rather than enhanced level. On another occasion, a gap in employment history was not identified and explored. Furthermore, telephone calls are not made to verify written references. None of these people have currently had access to children and therefore no actual risk has been presented. However, these shortfalls limit the ability of the manager to scrutinise applicants' fitness effectively. Consequently, information that potentially may have a bearing on suitability may not be identified.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

This is a small, new agency and in its first year of operation. It is the appropriately qualified manager's first registered manager role. The agency is growing slowly in a planned way and the manager is currently fulfilling a multitude of roles. The manager and the responsible individual have clear aspirations and vision for the service. For example, the agency uses current research to underpin its therapeutic approach, and is considering how to introduce new models of care in addition to the current secure base model. Equality and diversity are threaded through the service, ensuring that the children's and carers' needs are met.

The manager develops positive working relationships with partner agencies and liaises when he has any concerns regarding the children's well-being, for example when he and the carers believe that aspects of delegated authority are not in the child's best interests. The agency supports the carers effectively, providing helpful, targeted practical support to promote placement stability. The agency delivers good-quality care and support to the children, which makes a real difference in their lives. One professional said, 'It's an excellent placement and has been 100% life-changing for these children.' A parent placed with their child said, 'They [the agency manager

and carer] make a big difference for me and my baby. It means I can be a better mum and have a better future.'

The manager has detailed knowledge of each of the carers as well as the individual children and their progress. However, the documented monitoring systems are not consistently effective. For example, the review of the quality of care is aspirational rather than a true reflection of the service, and is not sufficiently evaluative to drive improvement. Furthermore, it contains inappropriate levels of information regarding individual children.

The agency is meeting the aims and objectives set out in the statement of purpose. However, placing authorities are not able to access current information about the agency, as an up-to-date statement of purpose is not available on the agency's website. The children's guide is a useful documents, which outlines the general services available. However, the guide is not currently available in alternative formats, which would make it easier for the younger children or those with poor literacy skills to understand. Parents living in a parent and child arrangement have an equivalent written guide to the service; however, this does not clearly outline the particular arrangements. This means that there is limited opportunity for the parents to refer to easy-to-read information at a later point.

Carers understand their role and are well supported through effective regular and focused supervision from the agency manager. The agency provides a variety of useful and relevant training. However, there is no documented personal development plan for each carer and most carers have yet to complete the agency's core identified training. This means that carers potentially are not aware of statutory guidance and/or best practice.

The carers feel valued and respected. The agency regularly seeks their views through internal case reviewing systems and regular visits. Carers said:

- 'I'm very positive about the agency, the support is phenomenal.'
- The manager is always available and is very supportive.'
- 'There's lots of practical support.'
- '24 seven, they're always there. They understand and they're on your side. As much as 'X' [the manager] is my social worker, he also feels like a friend.'
- 'It's a lovely, friendly agency who is always there for me.'

Panel processes are effective and ensure that only people deemed as suitable to be foster carers are approved. However, the minutes of panel meetings are on occasion poor. For example, it is not always clear whether the panel had the required people attending to make decisions regarding suitability, and what recommendations were made in respect of terms of approval. Furthermore, the written information sent to the carer and stated in the foster carer agreement on one occasion did not clearly state the decision reached by the agency decision-maker in respect of the carer's terms of approval. Consequently, there is a lack of clarity on this occasion in respect of how many children the agency has judged that the carer can care for effectively. This has had no negative effect in reality, as the children in placement have been

matched effectively with the skills and capacity of the carer.

Although a number of requirements and recommendations have been set, there are no breaches that have placed the children at risk. The shortfalls identified do not undermine the good-quality support provided to the carers and the consistently positive experiences of the children. The senior management team has the aspirations and the capacity to improve.

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: 1242101

Registered provider: Family Works Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 46 Parham Drive, Ilford, Essex IG2 6NB

Responsible individual: Wendy Edward-Tsuro

Registered manager: Tafadzwa Dzinoruma

Telephone number: 01702597797

Email address: tafa@fw-fostering.co.uk

Inspector

Joanna Heller, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2017