

Freedom Fostering

27 Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton WV1 4DJ

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Freedom Fostering is an independent fostering agency registered in 2003. The director of the company is the responsible individual. The agency undertakes recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers. The range of placement types provided includes emergency, long-term, medium-term, short-term and parent and child placements. As at 31 March 2016, the service had 29 fostering households, with 47 approved individual foster carers offering 59 fostering places. The service does not have any foster carers who provide for short breaks.

Inspection date: 29 January 2018

Date of previous inspection: 8 May 2017

This monitoring visit

The agency was last inspected in May 2017 and judged to be inadequate. There were 12 requirements and 13 recommendations made at that time. The purpose of this monitoring inspection is to evaluate the provider's response to the 12 requirements.

There has been good progress made since the last inspection. Consequently, all 12 requirements are judged as met. The fostering agency provides a detailed written guide to foster carers and placing authorities. Managers have also produced an accessible guide for children and young people.

The welfare of children and young people is now given the necessary attention when placements are being considered. There are positive arrangements in place for reviewing the needs of children and young people and how these are best matched with approved foster carers.

Foster carers, children and young people are encouraged to meet regularly at the service to share their experiences.

The agency ensures that foster carers are supported in providing a warm and reassuring welcome to children and young people. This includes additional visits

from supervising social workers and support workers during the early stages of a child or young person's new placement.

Managers have improved the child protection and safeguarding policy since the last inspection. All policies now contain all required details. For example, the safeguarding policy now makes it clear how allegations against foster carers will be managed.

Quality assurance systems are more robust. These include the introduction of a new electronic recording system, which has led to further improvements. In particular, the management team is now able to check that all records stay in line with regulation.

Consultation with foster carers, children and young people has improved. For example, there are now effective systems in place to secure the views of foster carers. A newly appointed 'carers advocate' is now gaining the views of foster carers, children and young people and is then presenting the key findings to the service's management team.

Foster carers spoken with during this inspection made the following comments:

- 'I am very happy with the agency.'
- 'Support is very important in fostering and I get good support from the agency.'
- 'The children have made really good progress.'
- 'The agency are happy to help out in any way they can. They understand our needs.'
- 'Supervision from my social worker is excellent.'
- 'I have excellent support from the agency. We get so much training. This helps us to understand the needs of the children.'

The governance of the fostering service has improved since the last inspection. The responsible individual and registered manager have reviewed systems and processes and made a range of positive changes. Central to these changes has been to ensure that staff remain involved in the development of the service and that their ideas are heard and acted upon.

The inspector spoke with supervising social workers, students on placements and other staff and managers in the agency as part of this monitoring inspection. They made the following comments:

- 'A big thing for me is being able to share my views with my supervisor and this enables me to see different diversities with practice. The agency are very good at helping me to understand the diversity of our carers.'
- 'Managers are really keen for us to develop our skills.'
- 'One thing I love about working at this agency is the opportunity to work with children. I really pride myself on using opportunities to work with children.'

The recommendations from the May 2017 inspection were not reviewed as part of

this visit.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that foster carers understand what is in the child's placement plan and have clarity about decisions they can make about the day-to-day arrangements for the child, including such matters as education, leisure activities, overnight stays, holidays and personal issues such as haircuts. (NMS 7.3)
- Ensure that prospective foster carers are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets the child's development needs. (NMS 13.6)
- Ensure that reviews of foster carers' approval are sufficiently thorough to allow the fostering service to properly satisfy itself about their carers' ongoing suitability to foster. (NMS 13.8)
- Ensure that all people working in or for the fostering service, and the central list of persons considered suitable to be members of a fostering panel, are interviewed as part of the selection process and have references checked to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities. (NMS 19.1)
- Ensure that, when recruiting staff and others, the registered person must have an effective system for reaching decisions as to who is to be appointed and the circumstances in which an application should be refused in the light of any criminal convictions or other concerns about suitability that are declared or discovered through the recruitment process. (NMS 19.5)
- Ensure that the fostering service has a designated person, who is a senior manager, responsible for managing allegations. The designated person has responsibility for liaising with the LADO and for keeping the subject of the allegation informed of progress during and after the investigation. (NMS 22.5)
- Ensure that staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 24.4)
- Ensure that a written record is kept by the fostering service detailing the time, date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person. The record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision. (NMS 24.5)
- Ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents, and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 25.2)

- Ensure that managers, staff, volunteers and foster carers are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The level of delegation and responsibility of the manager, and the lines of accountability, are clearly defined. (NMS 25.5)
- Ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and, where they are working with children, this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. (NMS 25.6)
- Ensure that no one may foster more than three children unless: the foster children are all siblings in relation to each other, or the local authority within whose area the foster carer lives exempts the foster carer from the usual fostering limit in relation to specific placements (in which case, they must set out the terms as detailed below), and the foster carer's terms of approval allow it (any terms of approval must be compatible with the number of children the foster carer is caring for, even if an exemption to the usual fostering limit has been granted, unless the placement is in an emergency and for less than six days).

(Statutory guidance – Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services, Paragraph 1, page 16)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC037304

Registered provider: Freedom Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 27 Waterloo Road, Wolverhampton WV1 4DJ

Responsible individual: Maureen Johnson

Inspector

Pete Hylton, social care inspector

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