

SC415679

Future Fostering Limited

Edgefield, Green Street Green Road, Dartford DA1 1QE

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Future Fostering Limited is an independent fostering service providing services for children and young people from birth to 18 years. The service is owned and managed by the registered manager and the responsible individual. At the time of this monitoring inspection, there were 40 approved fostering households with 43 children in placement and two young people on staying-put arrangements.

Inspection date: 24 January 2018

Date of previous full inspection: 8 October 2014

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was conducted to monitor the progress made against the requirements issued from the monitoring visit on 5 December 2017. The requirements had a completion date of 22 January 2018.

Two social care regulatory inspectors conducted this monitoring visit over two days. They identified that insufficient progress had been made against 16 of the 17 regulatory breaches identified at the previous monitoring visit. Serious and widespread failures of the agency's safeguarding practice continue to present serious risks to the children's welfare and safety. The inaction of the registered provider continues to raise concerns about its knowledge and ability to fulfil its roles, and raises questions about the fitness of the agency.

Leaders and managers have failed to recognise and act on serious and widespread failures across the agency and, consequently, to make the necessary improvements. The agency's action plan is poor: there has been limited action by the agency to address shortfalls and meet its targets. Urgent concerns, such as the need for reassessment of the foster carers who were not assessed appropriately, have not been given priority. Poor judgement continues within the agency with regards to safeguarding practices, matching and recruitment. These issues, combined with the

lack of focus on children, provide the regulator with no confidence that the agency has improved its practice to an acceptable level.

Inadequate matching processes continue to result in the children being placed with foster carers who do not have the necessary skills or knowledge to meet their needs. With regards to internal moves of children within the agency, the provider has failed to consider the foster carers' ability to meet the children's needs. For example, a child who regularly goes missing has been placed with a foster carer who has not completed training in strategies to reduce missing behaviour. Some children have been placed on respite care arrangements in households previously deemed inappropriate due to the risk of the children being abducted by family members. Consequently, shortfalls in the foster carers' knowledge or skills and other risk factors have not been addressed, resulting in the children remaining at risk of harm.

The quality of the children's risk assessments remains extremely poor. Agency staff have failed to review the children's risk assessments. Consequently, these assessments fail to identify all of the risks to the children or to provide the foster carers with sufficient information on how to reduce risk or prevent further harm. Examples include the ongoing failure of the agency staff to provide effective risk management strategies to reduce the children's missing behaviours. In other cases, the children's risk assessments remain as blank documents or have not been reviewed for three years. In these cases, the risks to the children are unknown, resulting in the foster carers having no knowledge of the actions they must take to protect these children.

Risk assessments of two children at risk of self-harm have been reviewed and these now contain more detail. However, strategies to reduce the likelihood of the children harming themselves remain simplistic. In these two cases, risk assessments provided to the children's placing authorities falsely advise that the foster carers have completed training in self-harm. The foster carers have still not had training in self-harm and are not provided with sufficient information to support them to intervene effectively to protect the children.

The agency staff and the foster carers continue to have an insufficient understanding of the risks faced by the children. The agency is yet to provide sufficient safeguarding training, including training in child sexual exploitation, children going missing and gangs, to the agency staff and the foster carers. The responsible individual advised that some of the foster carers attended safeguarding training in January 2018; however, he was unable to evidence the content of this training. The agency has introduced personal development plans for a minority of the foster carers. These plans are tokenistic and fail to analyse the foster carers' strengths, weaknesses and training needs sufficiently. Consequently, inadequate training has resulted in the continued failure of the agency to ensure that foster carers have the understanding and skills to take effective action to safeguard children.

Examples include the passive acceptance of children's accounts of where they have

been when they are missing and a failure to take reasonable steps to establish and verify the child's whereabouts when they are missing. Consequently, those involved in the child's care remain unaware of where the child was, whom the child was seeing, or whether they were or are being exploited. The agency failed to establish why a child has a contraceptive implant or why records suggest that they are at risk of sexual abuse. As a result, the agency staff and the child's foster carer are unaware of what they must do to safeguard this child. Agency staff failed to act on concerns regarding the physical environment of a foster carer's home. There is a lack of passion and drive from the staff to challenge the quality of care delivered by the foster carers appropriately. The staff's passive acceptance of poor care resulted in a child diagnosed with autism receiving demeaning punishments and living with broken furniture in a home that has a strong, unpleasant smell.

Child protection policies and procedures have been reviewed but are yet to improve the agency's poor safeguarding practices. There are still examples of the agency's staff and the foster carers not following the agency's procedures. There have been instances of the foster carers not contacting the police when a child is missing. Agency staff have carried out investigations into safeguarding concerns without being guided by the designated officer. Safeguarding or practice concerns have not been investigated when the LADO has advised the agency to do so. The agency's poor response to safeguarding children continues to compromise other safeguarding agencies' investigations and their ability to take the required actions to protect children.

Insufficient action has been taken to address unsafe recruitment procedures and practices that have resulted in unvetted staff being employed by the agency. The responsible individual has obtained suitability to work outside the UK checks for staff who required them. However, recruitment checks for the majority of staff, including the registered manager, responsible individual, supervising social workers, independent assessors, reviewing officers and panel members, remain incomplete. Two consultants have begun employment since the previous monitoring visit without the required recruitment checks being completed.

The previously identified inadequate staffing levels and poor training of supervising social workers have not been addressed. This has been compounded by an increase in the supervising social workers' caseloads. Consequently, the foster carers continue to receive inadequate supervision, insufficient support and poor guidance. Since the previous visit, there has been limited contact between agency staff and the foster carers and the foster carers' supervisions have not been carried out. As a result, significant safeguarding information has not been followed up. One example includes the failure to obtain further information on a foster carer's child's recent conviction. In another case, the agency's staff have failed to obtain specialist input for a child's mental health. As a result, this child's psychological needs continue not to be met.

Senior leaders have failed to take action to assure themselves that the agency's staff are suitably qualified and have sufficient skills to fulfil their roles. No assessments of

staff members' competencies have been completed. The staff have not received formal supervision since the previous monitoring visit. There are no individual development plans in place for members of staff. The redeployment of the panel chair to practice manager after significant concerns had been raised about their practice raises questions about the provider's commitment to ensuring that the agency employs staff with the required integrity, competence and skills. The responsible individual advised the regulator that the practice manager was removed from post during this visit.

Insufficient action has been taken to address the inadequate assessment of potential foster carers. Although no children are placed with the foster carers whose assessments breached the relevant legal requirements, no action has been taken by the provider to reassess these foster carers. Furthermore, no action has been taken by the agency to review the quality of those foster carers' assessments about which concerns have been raised regarding rigour and quality. Consequently, significant areas remain unchallenged. Those foster carers remain approved and caring for children when their ability to care for vulnerable children has not been suitably assessed.

Inadequate quality assurance and safeguarding systems fail to protect the children and promote their welfare. A failure to review basic checks of the foster carers means that children continue to be placed with foster carers who do not have the number of bedrooms to accommodate sufficiently all members of the family and the foster child. Birth children moving into their parents' bedrooms continue to be deemed acceptable. A number of regular visitors to foster carers' homes have not undergone the required scrutiny and, in some cases, the children have been left alone with unvetted visitors, compromising their safety.

Incompetent reviewing procedures remain unaddressed. The foster carers' practice, training and circumstances remain unscrutinised. This includes no review having taken place of a foster carer when the previous monitoring visit had found that panel discussions had not considered the findings of a section 47 investigation and a standard of care investigation, or allegations against the foster carer of aggressive behaviours.

Consequently, the agency continues to approve foster carers without their poor practice being addressed, further compromising the children's safety.

The lack of monitoring systems, and ineffective oversight by the leaders and managers, continue to contribute to inadequate practices, compromising the agency's ability to safeguard the children. The provider has introduced morning team meetings; however, these have not resulted in improvements in practice. New templates have been devised to monitor safeguarding concerns and the children's well-being but these have not been used. Senior leaders continue to rely on the competence of the supervising social workers to make them aware of concerns. No actions have been taken to review the quality of children's case records. Senior leaders do not check for evidence of the supervising social workers taking action to

respond to safeguarding concerns or whether supervising social workers have acted upon actions set by senior leaders. Consequently, the responsible persons have not satisfied themselves that all necessary actions are taken to protect the children and promote their welfare.

The provider has taken action to notify Ofsted of significant events in line with regulation. As a result, sufficient action has been taken to meet this requirement.

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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 |
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| <p>(1) A person must not carry on a fostering agency unless—</p> <p>(d) in the case of an organisation carrying on a fostering agency, where the organisation has given notice to the Chief Inspector of the name, address and position in the organisation of an individual (“the responsible individual”) who is a director, manager, secretary or other officer of the organisation and is responsible for supervising the management of the fostering agency, the responsible individual, satisfies the requirements of paragraph (2) as to fitness.</p> <p>(2) The requirements are that—</p> <p>(a) the person is of integrity and good character,</p> <p>(c) full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1.</p> <p>(Regulation 5(1)(d)(2)(a)(c))</p> | 28/02/2018 |
| <p>(1) A person must not manage a fostering agency unless they are fit to do so.</p> <p>(2) A person is not fit to manage a fostering agency unless that person—</p> <p>(a) is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>(b) having regard to the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by it—</p> <p>(i) has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for managing the fostering agency.</p> | 28/02/2018 |

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| (Regulation 7(1)(2)(a)(b)(i)) | |
| <p>The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and (b) the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency, <p>carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill.</p> <p>(2) The registered provider must ensure that—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) where the registered provider is an organisation, the responsible individual, undertakes, from time to time, such training as is appropriate to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary for carrying on the fostering agency. <p>(3) The registered manager must undertake from time to time such training as is appropriate to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary for managing the fostering agency. (Regulation 8(1)(a)(b)(2)(b)(3))</p> | 28/02/2018 |
| <p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11(a))</p> | 28/02/2018 |
| <p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and (b) sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. <p>(Regulation 12(1)(a)(b))</p> | 28/02/2018 |
| <p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a policy which is agreed with the local police, setting out—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the measure to be followed to prevent children placed with foster parents from going missing from their placement, and (b) the procedure to be followed when a child is missing from a foster parent's home without permission. <p>(Regulation 13(3)(a)(b))</p> | 28/02/2018 |
| <p>15 (1) The fostering service provider must promote the health and development of children placed with foster parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (2) (b) In particular the fostering service provider must ensure that each child has access to such medical, dental, nursing, psychological and psychiatric advice, treatment and other services as the child may require. <p>(Regulation 15(1)(2)(b))</p> | 28/02/2018 |

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| <p>The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17(1))</p> | <p>28/02/2018</p> |
| <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, having regard to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the size of the fostering service, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by it, and (b) the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. <p>(Regulation 19(a)(b))</p> | <p>28/02/2018</p> |
| <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform. (Regulation 20(3)(b))</p> | <p>28/02/2018</p> |
| <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21(4)(a))</p> | <p>28/02/2018</p> |
| <p>The fostering panel must—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) advise, where appropriate, on the procedures under which reviews in accordance with regulation 28 are carried out by the fostering service provider, and periodically monitor their effectiveness, (b) oversee the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider, and (c) give advice, and make recommendations, on such other matters or cases as the fostering service provider may refer to it. (Regulation 25 (a)(b)(c)) | <p>28/02/2018</p> |
| <p>Where a person ("X") applies to become a foster parent and the fostering service provider decide to assess X's suitability to become a foster parent, any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1)(b) where X has been a foster parent within the preceding 12 months and was approved as such by another fostering service provider, must request a written reference from that other fostering service provider, (e) may, where X was approved as a foster parent by another fostering service provider and consents, request access to the relevant records compiled by | <p>28/02/2018</p> |

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| <p>that other fostering service provider in relation to X. (Regulation 26(1)(b)(e))</p> | |
| <p>A fostering service provider must not approve a person who has been approved as a foster parent by another fostering service provider where that approval has not been terminated.</p> <p>(2) A fostering service provider must not approve X as a foster parent unless—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) they have completed their assessment of X's suitability, and (b) the fostering panel has considered the application. <p>Regulation 27 (1)(2)(a)(b)</p> | <p>28/02/2018</p> |
| <p>(3) When undertaking a review, the fostering service provider must—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) make such enquiries and obtain such information as they consider necessary in order to review whether the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent's household continues to be suitable. <p>(12) As soon as practicable after making the decision referred to in paragraph (9), (10)(b), or (11), the fostering service provider must give written notice to the foster parent stating (as the case may be)—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) that the foster parent and the foster parent's household continue to be suitable, and that the terms of the approval continue to be appropriate; (b) that the foster parent's approval is terminated from a specified date, and the reasons for the termination, or (c) the revised terms of the approval and the reasons for the revision. <p>(Regulation 28 (3)(a)(12)(a)(b)(c))</p> | <p>28/02/2018</p> |
| <p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and (b) improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. <p>(2) The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p> <p>(3) The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority).</p> <p>(Regulation 35(1)(a)(b)(2)(3))</p> | <p>28/02/2018</p> |

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: SC415679

Registered provider: Future Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 5 Crayford Road, Dartford DA1 4AN

Responsible individual: Pankaj Gupta

Registered manager: Mrs Savitri Panwar

Inspectors:

Helen Lee, social care inspector

Melissa McMillan, social care inspector

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