

# Wholistic Fostering Ltd

Wholistic Fostering Limited

34 Brook House, Brook Street Business Centre, Brook Street, Tipton DY4 9DD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

A small private company operates this fostering agency. The agency currently has five children placed with foster carers. Six households with 10 carers have been approved.

**Inspection dates:** 12 to 16 March 2018

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

**requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

inadequate

The independent fostering agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 9 February 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## **Key findings from this inspection**

This independent fostering agency requires improvement to be good because:

- Managers do not consistently monitor the quality of care provided to children.
- Risk assessments are weak.
- Foster carers do not receive sufficient training to meet the needs of children.
- Children's case files do not all contain the statutory documentation needed to ensure that children's needs are met.
- Recruitment of panel members is poor.
- Leadership and management are poor. There is insufficient independent oversight of the agency.

The independent fostering agency's strengths:

- Children make progress in their education.
- Children enjoy quality time with their family and friends.

## 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
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 and the fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (1)(3))	01/05/2018
A fostering panel must make a written record of its proceedings and the reasons for its recommendations. (Regulation 24 (2))	01/05/2018
A fostering service provider must maintain a case record for each foster parent approved by them which must include copies of the documents specified in paragraph (2) and the information specified in paragraph (3). The documents referred to in paragraph (1) are the foster care agreement. (Regulation 30 (1)(2)(d))	01/05/2018
The registered person must maintain a system for improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35 (1)(b))	01/05/2018

### Recommendations

- Ensure that foster carers provide an environment and culture that promotes, models and supports positive behaviour. (NMS 3.2)
- Ensure that the foster home is warm, adequately furnished and decorated, is maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene and is in good order throughout. Outdoor spaces which are part of the premises are safe, secure and well maintained. (NMS 10.2)
- Ensure that the fostering service only suggests foster carers to local

authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified, the fostering service should work with the responsible authority to ensure the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required. (NMS 15.1)

- Ensure that the fostering service can demonstrate, including from written records, that it consistently follows good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in foster carer selection and staff and panel member recruitment. This includes CRB checks. All personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained in, understand and operate these good practices (NMS 19.2)
- Ensure that on approval, foster carers are given information, either a handbook or electronic resources, which cover policies and procedures and which is updated regularly. This is with regard to the policies and procedures clarifying the relationship between the responsible individual and the manager. (NMS 21.10)
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and the registered person are properly managed and supported and understand to whom they are accountable. (NMS 24.2)
- 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)

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

Managers do not adequately monitor children's progress and outcomes. Children's files do not always have the appropriate and necessary information that allow for foster carers to provide the best support to children. The supervising social worker does not actively challenge placing authorities to obtain important documents and so key information is missing from children's files. For example, delegated authority for one child is shown as being somebody other than the foster carer and review meeting minutes are not available. Foster carers' supervisions do not monitor or track the progress of children sufficiently and so it is unclear whether children are reaching their full potential.

Children's files do not contain enough information about how foster carers can support children to develop the skills that they need and to help them overcome past experiences. Some matching documents are poor and do not evidence the rationale behind the decision-making in such instances or how foster carers will meet children's needs.

Foster carers are not all suitably trained to meet the needs of the children that they care for. Foster carers have large gaps in their training. For example, foster carers who are caring for children at risk of modern day child slavery and sexual exploitation have not all been trained in these areas.

Overall, children make some progress. Children attend school and make progress in their educational attainment. Some children who did not go to school prior to their foster placement are now attending school daily, progressing well and completing their homework regularly. As a result, children develop both socially and academically.

Children's health needs are met. Children benefit from a healthy diet and exercise and attend regular medical appointments. As a result, children develop and are becoming more aware of their own health needs.

Children benefit from seeing, and spending time with, family and friends. Some foster carers travel long distances to make sure that children maintain their relationships with those who are significant to them. Some children enjoyed spending time on Christmas Day with their parents and foster carers. Good relationships between foster carers and the children's parents contribute significantly to children's positive outcomes. Children feel a sense of belonging and maintain their identity.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

The majority of the children placed with the agency are safe and feel safe. However, there are areas of safeguarding practice that need to improve.

On many occasions, managers take action in relation to safeguarding concerns. However, communication about, and management of, some safeguarding issues has not been consistently good enough, and on a small number of occasions has left children at risk. For example, unannounced visits were not undertaken to ensure that foster carers were abiding by a signed agreement during a child protection enquiry.

The agency's risk assessments and safer caring policies are not sufficiently robust. They do not assess all potential risks or give foster carers clear and effective guidance. The lack of effective strategies has the potential to place children at risk.

Some foster carers do not always provide an environment and culture that promote and support positive behaviour. One foster carer has used inappropriate language to control the placement. One foster carers' homes contain hazards, for example an open gas meter box and hazardous lighting.

Safer recruitment practices for panel members are weak. Managers have failed to ensure that they have appropriate professional references for qualified social workers who sit on their fostering panel. The fostering panel chair and the agency decision-maker do not ensure robust practice when determining foster carer approval. Panel minutes lack clarity and do not demonstrate appropriate rigour when making decisions. Panel recommendations are not always recorded, nor are the minutes clear about who was present during panel. These shortfalls demonstrate a lack of oversight. This area was a shortfall identified at the last inspection that has not been met.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

There is a suitably qualified registered manager in post. This is a small agency and comprises a registered manager and a responsible individual. The registered manager is also the supervising social worker. The registered manager and responsible individual are in a relationship. Managers have only now updated their policies and procedures as recommended at their last inspection in order to ensure that there is clear guidance for foster carers and children about how they can raise any issues independently.

Management oversight of the agency is poor. The lack of documentation and poor monitoring means that managers are not able to monitor the progress that children are making or evaluate the quality of care provided by foster carers. Consequently, the agency is unable to use accurate data to drive improvement.

The recording of the supervision of the registered manager is poor and lacks any discussion about children, foster carers or professional development. There is no evidence that the registered manager's annual appraisals are completed by the responsible individual, they are not signed and the content has remained the same each year. There are no developmental needs recorded.

There is a lack of accountability and independent oversight. This has led to children's needs and foster carers' practice not being monitored effectively. In one case, foster carer agreements were not updated following the agency decision-maker's approval

decision. This means that foster carers do not know what is expected of them.

Managers are keen to improve the service. However, action to meet some regulatory shortfalls from the last inspection has not been effective. Managers have not fully recognised or understood the shortfalls identified during this inspection.

Consequently, managers are not ensuring that they are fulfilling all of the aims and objectives set out in the 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:** SC476942

**Registered provider:** Wholistic Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** 34 Brook House, Brook Street Business Centre,  
Brook Street, Tipton DY4 9DD

**Responsible individual:** Michael Dennis

**Registered manager:** Patricia Nettleford

**Telephone number:** 01922 622233

**Email address:** [info@wholisticfostering.co.uk](mailto:info@wholisticfostering.co.uk)

## **Inspector**

Sandra King, social care inspector



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