

# Amicus Foster Care

Amicus Foster Care Limited

St. Werburghs Community Centre, Horley Road, BRISTOL, BS2 9TJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Amicus Foster Care is a small, Bristol-based private limited company which covers Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Wiltshire, North Somerset, Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and Somerset. The service has an office in a community centre in Bristol. The service currently has 32 fostering households, and 42 children placed.

**Inspection dates:** 2 to 6 July 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of last inspection:** 16 February 2015

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:**

None

## Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is outstanding because:

- The quality and effectiveness of the service has remained consistently high since the last inspection in 2015. The service has been rated outstanding since they were established in 2009.
- Carers and staff make excellent use of published research. As a result children and young people make sustained progress in their overall development. Leaders, managers and key staff share their learning beyond the agency.
- The skilled, highly qualified and stable staff team along with experienced and loving carers ensure that placement stability is maintained for most of the children and young people placed by the agency.
- The agency is highly committed to helping children, young people and carers. Through exceptionally enduring professional relationships, the agency supports children and young people, carers and members of birth families under extreme stress to stay together.
- Leaders and managers make exceptionally good use of clinical supervision from highly qualified professionals. This enhances their practice skills to better support carers, children and young people.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development :

- The agency could develop their electronic recording system to better capture the progress and improved outcomes of the children and young people.
- The agency could consider alternative arrangements for children to attend meetings, so to avoid any unnecessary disruption to school attendance.
- The agency must ensure there is no delay in the submission of notifiable events.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

The agency has excelled at providing highly individual, tailored support for children, young people, birth families and foster carers. Carers and professionals speak highly of the therapeutic support they have received. Consequently, the outcomes for children and young people are consistently positive.

Carers, their sons and daughters, and children and young people say that their family relationships have improved enormously as a result of the therapeutic support. Children and young people show marked improvements in their behaviour, education, emotional well-being and stability. In many cases, the agency's exceptionally skilled work has helped to avoid family breakdown. This has a major positive impact on children's life chances.

All staff within the agency have an excellent understanding of each of the children and young people's needs. The diversity of the staff team and panel members makes them extremely good at identifying the needs of the children and young people. The panel chair spoke highly of the impact saying, 'the commitment to achieving such a mix and enabling the panel to develop is impressive'. As a result of the agency's approach to embracing difference, placement matches are strong.

The agency is a strong advocate of the children and young people it works with. There are particularly strong links with schools. The work with education providers has supported some children who are struggling to remain at their school, when this might otherwise have proved impossible. Bespoke packages of support informed by the agency's therapeutic model results in children and young people making significant progress in all aspects of their lives.

The agency is fully inclusive. They consult with carers, children and young people at every point. They act on their comments and tailors the support they provide, to meet changing needs.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

The agency maintains a high level of safeguarding training. Independent and external clinical supervision takes place to ensure a small agency remains up to date with research developments.

Staff have an excellent understanding of how children and young people's previous experiences of trauma and abuse affect their behaviour. There is strong evidence to show the impact of carers and staff when supporting children and families who are under extreme pressure and at risk of placement breakdown. Their deep understanding of such circumstances, supported by clear safeguarding policies and procedures, helps to keep carers, children and young people safe.

Safeguarding of children and young people remains central to the agency's ethos. The registered manager knows when to escalate concerns. There are a number of examples of how swift action has prevented children and young people from being subjected to child sexual exploitation.

The agency supports and promotes well any expression and decision making for children and young people with communication impairments. By providing a wide range of accessible communication tools, and research led informed therapeutic support, all children and young people are provided with safer and more personalised care.

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

Leaders and managers maintain exceptionally high standards of practice built around a culture of continuous improvement. This is achieved by consulting regularly with a number of highly respected professionals who provide focused clinical supervision. These colleagues are chosen carefully to help develop specific areas of their work. Extremely good use is made of these sessions to learn and improve in light of their findings.

A fully inclusive approach to learning means clinical supervision, training and drop-surgeries are provided to all foster carers.

Leaders and managers have an excellent reputation with local authorities and educational professionals. So much so, their approach to supporting children and young people is shared with, and adopted by other schools and local authorities. The agency's practice is recognised as exceptional, and progress and learning is shared across the sector and internationally. For example, through a presentation at a life story work summit in Lisbon.

Leaders, managers and all staff attend a wide range of training courses to further their professional development. The staff team collectively, have an impressive skill and qualification base. As a direct result of the level of skill, qualification and experience, all practice is current, and all work undertaken is completed to a notable standard with research threaded throughout.

Leaders and managers use a range of tools to closely monitor the agency. They make excellent use of feedback from a number of independent professionals. All professionals spoken with rated highly the leadership and management of the agency..

### **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:** SC389720

**Registered provider:** Amicus Foster Care Limited

**Registered provider address:** 141 Englishcombe Lane, BATH, BA2 2EL

**Responsible individual:** Nasareen Ahmed

**Registered manager:** Patricia McManamon

**Telephone number:** 01179555039

**Email address:** [patricia.mcmanamon@amicusfostercare.com](mailto:patricia.mcmanamon@amicusfostercare.com)

## **Inspector(s)**

Linda Bond, social care inspector



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