

SWIIS Foster Care Limited

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Suite 39–40 Aztec Centre, Aztec West, Almondsbury, Bristol BS32 4TD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

SWIIS Foster Care Ltd is an independently owned national fostering service which operates five separately registered offices in England. The South Region England branch has office premises in Almondsbury, near Bristol. There is an additional office in Bristol city centre which oversees marketing, recruitment and training for the whole agency.

The agency recruits, assesses and supports foster carers who provide short- and long-term placements for children and young people, some of whom may have disabilities. Parent and child, short-break and emergency placements are also available.

The South Region England branch currently works with 36 approved foster carers. There are 41 children placed.

The branch manager was registered with Ofsted in January 2015.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 July 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 13 July 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The fostering agency cares for children and young people to a very high standard, to meet their unique individual needs.
- Warm, loving relationships with their foster carers help children and young people to feel safe and secure. This enables them to begin to develop attachments and make good progress in comparison with their starting points.
- The agency encourages high-quality therapeutic parenting by providing training and direct work to children and foster carers. Foster carers receive tailored, individual support to help them to meet the children's needs.
- Foster carers work collaboratively with staff to advocate for their children and young people, for example to help them achieve a full-time education.
- The agency matches children with fostering families wisely. Good matching decisions help to reduce the rate of placement disruption. When disruptions do occur, they are managed with the child's best interests at heart.
- The recruitment, marketing, placement and training services are based in the agency's central Bristol office and cover all five branches. By centralising these services, the agency can ensure that a consistent, high level of service is provided to enquirers.
- Rigorous management monitoring, staff recruitment, supervision and training ensure that staff have the skills and personal qualities needed to support foster carers and children to a high standard.
- The agency's governance is very well structured and organised. Senior leaders are strong, visible and ambitious for the service, while maintaining a child-centred approach. This helps to drive improved outcomes for children and young people.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Specialist clinical psychological consultation for staff and foster carers would further enhance the agency's service to children and young people.
- The agency is currently reviewing the staffing arrangements to accommodate the next phase of its development. Administrative support should be considered as part of this review.

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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* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This fostering service provides consistently good experiences and highly positive outcomes for children and young people. This helps children and young people to develop secure, warm and loving relationships which help them achieve a sense of permanence and belonging.

As a result, children and young people make very good progress in their foster families. Previously neglected young children who were not reaching their developmental milestones are now able to walk, play and interact with their fostering families. Older children and young people said that their foster carers have helped them to make many positive changes in their lives. One child described their foster carers, and the agency, as 'amazing'.

Professional marketing and recruitment staff ensure that everyone who makes contact with the agency as a prospective foster carer feels welcomed, valued and supported. The agency has well-developed IT systems to access prospective foster carers through social media. This helps to ensure a prompt response to enquiries.

Recently approved foster carers said that they found the assessment and panel process to be fair and thorough. Assessments are detailed, well recorded and carried out in a timely and efficient manner. This helps to avoid delay and makes foster carers available for children's placements at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

The agency works closely with placing authorities to ensure that the children and young people are carefully matched with foster carers. To achieve this, the placing authorities have access to good-quality, accessible introductory information about each fostering family. This helps placing social workers and children who may come to live with them to picture the family who will be caring for them. This helps to ensure placement stability.

Foster carers unanimously said that they are exceptionally well supported. Staff are readily accessible to them, with access to on-call managers in the event of a serious incident. They praised the quality of supervision and training, which is tailored to meet their needs.

Placements are also supported by the offer of planned short breaks for foster carers. Children often stay with members of the fostering family's wider network, so they know with whom they will be staying.

The agency has an education advisor, who has done some excellent work to advocate for children and young people, to ensure that their educational rights are maintained. This member of staff works with educational services to ensure that children receive the education to which they are entitled.

Children and young people receive good healthcare, including bespoke therapeutic

services from support workers and other professionals from inside and outside the agency. The agency's support worker links with local authority resources teams to share information and provide a better service to children.

Foster carers show selfless commitment to their children and young people. For reasons outside the agency's control, some children's care plans have unexpectedly changed from short-term to long-term fostering. By agreeing to a change in the terms of their approval, foster carers have enabled these children to remain in their care, avoiding a potentially damaging move. These children have responded very positively to the enhanced stability and security of their placements.

Since the previous inspection, the agency has worked hard to increase the ways in which children and young people can be included in decision making. When the fostering panel considers new applicants for approval, they now include questions which the children and young people have devised. The agency also holds participation events to help children and young people to communicate their views. The children and young people have recently been involved in a national artwork project to celebrate the agency's 30th birthday.

Children and young people enjoy many exciting and rewarding activities, both at home and in the community. The agency also runs regular, inclusive events for fostering families. This helps to bring foster carers and children together across the agency, so that they can build links and share experiences.

Children and young people almost all attend school or college and have high rates of attendance and attainment. There is currently only one recently placed child who is not yet in education, training or employment.

When children and young people have to leave their foster placements at short notice, the agency ensures that there is sufficient time for the ending to be carefully planned. This avoids sudden placement changes and helps children to leave, if possible, on a positive note.

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

The staff follow clear, locally agreed safeguarding policies. The registered manager consults the designated officer for child protection if she has any concerns about standards of care or practice. This ensures that the correct procedures are followed and helps to keep children safe.

The fostering agency has a thorough, well-audited system for recruiting staff and panel members. This helps to ensure that children and young people are not exposed to adults who may potentially pose a risk to them.

The agency manages risks affecting individual children and young people very well. Detailed risk assessments are carried out on fostering families' homes and pets. Children's risk assessments are reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain accurate and relevant. This helps to ensure that children and young people are kept safe in their fostering family's home and during activities.

Most children and young people do not go missing. On the rare occasions when this happens, the agency responds appropriately to help keep them safe. This includes working closely with other agencies to share information, manage the risks and, on occasion, challenge timescales for return-home interviews. The agency manager and staff understand that the good quality of the child's relationship with their foster carers is a major protective factor for young people who go missing.

Foster carers encourage respect within their families. They establish clear boundaries around the children and young people's behaviour. This helps the children and young people to feel safe and secure.

Foster carers are well trained and supported to help them to manage children's and young people's behaviour. One foster carer described how they respond to the child's body language to help them identify a deteriorating situation. They then engage the child in an activity to help distract them before the situation escalates.

The agency has a no-restraint policy. The sole restraint that has taken place since the last inspection was in response to a serious incident which placed the foster carer and his family at risk of harm. A management review of this incident led to a decision to train all foster carers in de-escalation strategies. This shows that the agency monitors all significant events and learns from them.

The agency looks after some young people from overseas, who are seeking asylum in this country. The agency is working with the Refugee Council to ensure that foster carers and staff receive relevant training to help them to support these young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency has strong, child-focused leadership and management. The senior leadership team provides highly effective financial and strategic governance. A high degree of mutual respect between senior leaders, managers and staff ensures that all roles are equally supported and valued.

The registered manager is a highly experienced fostering services professional who brings considerable skill to the team. She holds a qualification at level 5 in leadership and management.

Management monitoring is very good. The registered manager ensures that all the agency's work is quality assured to achieve consistently good practice. She has well-developed monitoring systems to track children's progress over the course of their placements.

The agency's records are very well managed. These provide children and young people with a permanent account of their lives with their foster families. All records seen were detailed, relevant and up to date. The agency can produce evidence that it has actively sought documents which have not been received from placing authorities.

The registered manager and responsible individual are passionate about their work and constantly strive for improvement. They work collaboratively with other agencies to achieve good outcomes for children. The fostering service has been involved, with other independent providers, in Leicester University's ongoing research project into foster carers' attachment styles. This is a new venture for the agency.

The agency is also actively involved with the Fostering Network. In response to a request from foster carers, they have commissioned this organisation to provide workshops in Bristol and London on how to manage income tax. The agency has, therefore, started to collaborate with other organisations and become involved in social care research. This is an area for future development.

The agency has a highly effective, diverse fostering panel, in which previously looked-after young people are represented. The panel has an experienced chair and produces good-quality recommendations to the agency decision maker (ADM). There are no delays in the recommendations or approval of foster carers. The ADM is a highly effective decision maker, who exercises appropriate challenge and scrutiny. She is not afraid to defer decisions if there is insufficient information to proceed.

The panel administrator prepares extremely good minutes, with clear reasons for the panel's recommendations. She has a busy role, with many wide-ranging responsibilities. At the moment, there is limited capacity to respond if the administrator had to be absent from work for any reason. This has not, to date, caused any difficulty. The agency has discussed how best to resource the social work and support worker service to the London part of the region. Administrative support is also being considered as part of the agency's plans for future development.

The staff praised their registered manager's high level of involvement and commitment. They receive regular, well-structured supervision. Good-quality training means that they feel exceptionally well supported and safe in a challenging area of work. Team meetings are well organised and include a review of all the agency's children, so that staff are aware of the latest developments. This means that if a foster carer's supervising social worker is not available, other colleagues can help to support a child in placement in their absence.

The agency does not currently commission clinical consultation for staff and foster carers. This does not constitute a breach of national minimum standards, but this additional source of professional guidance would further enhance the agency's therapeutic services.

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: SC470458

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Inspector(s)

Heather Chaplin, social care inspector



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