

Fostering Dimensions

Fostering Dimensions Limited
The Howitt Building, Unit V12, Nottingham Business Centre, Lenton Boulevard,
Nottingham NG7 2BY
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This fostering service is privately operated and was registered in January 2012. It provides short-term, long-term, emergency, bridging, and parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection there were 12 fostering households providing placements for nine children and young people.

The manager has been registered since 2012.

Inspection dates: 13 to 16 August 2018

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 August 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:

- Children and young people make good progress in all areas of their lives. This

is due to the commitment and skill of carers and of the support they receive from agency staff.

- From their starting points, children and young people make good progress in relation to their educational attendance and achievement. Carers act as positive advocates and support them to settle into their educational provisions.
- Carers actively support and promote contact for children and young people with family, friends and significant others. This increases their self-esteem and sense of being valued.
- Carers prepare young people well for their eventual moves to adult life. They provide support and guidance, enabling young people to learn the necessary skills to make a successful transition.
- Children and young people have their health needs well met. Carers and agency staff work well with involved agencies to ensure that services are provided to meet physical and emotional health needs.
- Children and young people feel safe in their foster placements. They understand how to make a complaint and report feeling safe from harm. Carers understand their key protective role and follow relevant procedures well.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency needs to ensure that Ofsted is provided with an annual management report.
- The agency needs to ensure that full and detailed records are made of all complaints, including outcomes being formally provided to complainants.
- Managers need to ensure that all carers have completed the recommended training on administration of medication. A recommendation was set at the previous inspection, which has not yet been met.
- Managers need to ensure that consistent recruitment checks and recording for new fostering panel members are maintained.
- When foster carers resign, the fostering panel and agency decision maker should meet to consider and record their views on the ongoing suitability of such carers, had they not resigned.

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 registered person must provide Ofsted with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority. (Regulation 35(2))	05/10/2018
The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 18(4))	05/10/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that foster carers are trained in the management and administration of medication. (NMS 6.10)
- Ensure 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 staff and panel member recruitment. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 19.2)
- The decision-maker does not have the power to decline a resignation as this takes effect automatically after 28 days, but this need not prevent the fostering service from forming a view about the person's suitability to be a foster carer. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services', 5.59)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people make good progress in all areas of their lives. Their carers act as strong advocates for them. It is clear that children and young people increase in confidence and feel valued. This helps them to make good progress. Some examples of this include:

- One young person has reduced their concerning and risky behaviours significantly over the past two years.
- One child with complex needs now responds well to boundaries and routines. Their speech has also improved. The placing social worker said: 'She has made huge progress in all areas of her development since moving to the placement.'
- One young person was routinely missing from care and using substances. They no longer do either. The young person has completed their formal education and is now in paid employment
- The agency has one staying put placement. The young adult sees their carers as their extended family and feels secure and happy.

Education is in place for all children and young people. Managers seek feedback from education providers about children's and young people's progress. Carers support children and young people to attend, engage and achieve. There is very positive evidence of carers preparing children and young people well for school moves, including providing them with photos of their new schools and teaching staff. This helps children and young people overcome any anxieties they may have.

Children and young people have their health needs well met. Carers have a clear understanding of health needs, and know how to meet these needs. Specialist support and counselling are also made available. Carers receive training on attachment theory, which enables them to meet the emotional needs of children and young people well.

Carers prepare young people well for adult life. One carer said: 'I want to support my young person to learn how to cook, iron, budget, and so on. This will enable him to make a smooth transition to the adult world.' Young people feel very well supported while they make transitions.

Children and young people have a range of positive social experiences. They go on holiday with their carers and join local youth clubs and groups. The agency also organises social events for carers, children and young people to attend. This provides children and young people with a sense of belonging and increases their confidence.

Carers support and enable children and young people to keep in touch with family members, friends and significant others. Carers place a high value on ensuring that

children and young people feel able to maintain such relationships. Placing social workers praise the agency's carers for their commitment to working with family members.

Carers report feeling well supported by managers and agency staff. They are fully involved in decision making about new placements, and say that they are not put under pressure to accept placements. Carers value the training and development opportunities provided for them. The agency operates a mentor system. This provides newly approved carers with support and advice from more experienced carers. Newly approved carers value having such support and find it very useful.

Children and young people know their rights, and how to make a complaint. One complaint response did not provide a young person with a clear account of the action that managers had taken. Managers responded quickly to the issues raised, but feedback given to the young person needed to be clearer and more specific.

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

Carers can respond well to any actual or potential risks because they have a clear understanding of the presenting needs of each child. Children and young people learn how to manage their own behaviours over time. One young person said: 'My carer really helps me to manage my feelings and to recognise when I am becoming frustrated or angry.'

Incidents of children and young people going missing from care are rare. Carers demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in responding to such incidents. They act promptly, and follow protocols and procedures well. One young person had a concerning history of missing from care at the start of their placement, but no longer runs away from home.

Carers also have a good understanding of other forms of harm or abuse. They receive training and report that this greatly assists them in identifying and responding to harm or abuse.

Carers support children and young people to take age-appropriate risks. This includes teaching them to use public transport unaided. Carers encourage young people to feel confident to use public resources and access activities. They want young people to feel well equipped and confident.

Recruitment of agency staff, carers and fostering panel members is generally robust and detailed. One file does not provide a clear sense of all checks made and actions taken by agency managers as part of the recruitment process for a fostering panel member. There is a need for managers to ensure that any gaps in the employment history of applicants are clearly considered, discussed and recorded.

Supervising social workers make at least one unannounced visit to carers each year, often more. This provides an opportunity to consider the home conditions and to speak with placed children and young people. Managers track and monitor such

visits, which is positive.

Any allegations made against carers have been responded to quickly by managers. Records detail the actions taken by the agency and the support provided for carers during the investigation process. One carer resigned following an allegation. Managers did not present the case to their fostering panel and decision maker for consideration as to whether they would have recommended continued approval.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager exhibits a firm commitment to ensuring that children and young people receive good care and support from carers. She understands the complex needs of children and young people placed and the importance of careful matching with carers.

The manager has systems in place to provide good oversight of all aspects of how the agency is run. Managers undertake regular monitoring and produce reports on how the services improve the experiences and progress of children and young people. However, managers have failed to provide Ofsted with copies of their management monitoring reports since 2015. It is a requirement that independent fostering agencies provide such reports on an annual basis.

The agency's staff report high levels of satisfaction in their roles. They value the support provided for them by managers. The agency currently employs two supervising social workers who receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. Supervising social workers have access to relevant training and development opportunities.

Carers also report feeling valued. They say that they are well supported by agency staff and managers. Carers have access to a range of training and development opportunities. A recommendation was set at the last inspection around training for carers on the administration of medication. A plan is in place for all carers to undertake this, but the training has not yet been completed by every carer. The recommendation has been reset following this inspection. There are plans for all carers to have completed this training by September 2018.

Case records reflect children and young people's lives well. Some case records are of an extremely good quality. They will be of great value to children and young people if they request access to their files in the future. Agency staff consider all carer records and provide formal written feedback. This provides consistency of recording and assists carers with improving the clarity and style of their recording practices.

The fostering panel provides good scrutiny of assessments. Panel members bring a variety of skills and experience. There are plans to further increase the membership this year. The panel chair and the decision maker are competent and skilled. They provide helpful feedback for agency managers, to promote continual improvement. Recommendations from panel and decision makers are based on a detailed consideration of all documentation presented to every panel.

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: SC438506

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Inspector

Tracy Murty: social care regulatory inspector



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