

# Children Of Colour Ltd

Children of Colour Ltd  
102–116 Windmill Road, Croydon CR0 2XQ  
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this independent fostering agency**

Children of Colour fostering service is based in the London Borough of Croydon. It is a privately owned, independent fostering agency providing services for children and young people from birth to 18 years. The primary aim of the agency is to provide high-quality foster placements to meet children's diverse needs.

Children of Colour provides emergency, respite, short- and long-term foster placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 24 approved fostering households and 31 children were placed through the agency. The agency provides a service to a wide range of children, which includes sibling groups and disabled children.

**Inspection dates:** 1 to 5 October 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:** 4 June 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 excellent progress from their starting points in terms of their emotional well-being, positive behaviour and education.
- Foster carers provide warm, nurturing care. Young people feel cared for and feel that they are accepted as part of the family.
- Foster carers value the high levels of support provided by the agency social workers and manager.
- The agency and foster carers work effectively in partnership with the professional network to promote young people's best interests.
- Managers have high expectations and aspirations in relation to the quality of care and outcomes for young people.
- A thoughtful approach to matching ensures resilient and stable placements for young people.
- The agency has a robust fostering panel. This ensures high standards in relation to the recruitment and approval of foster carers.
- There is a strong culture of inclusiveness throughout the agency. This promotes diversity and ensures that a diverse range of needs are met.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Improve case recording to ensure that the agency can demonstrate how supervising social workers are supporting foster carers to improve the outcomes for children and young people.
- Ensure that written risk assessments and safety plans are in place to clearly address known areas of vulnerability for each young person.
- Improve management monitoring systems in order to better evidence how care and support are being delivered in line with the agency's policies.
- Provide training for foster carers in the management and administration of medication.

## **What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- Foster carers' files must include records of supervisory meetings. Meetings must have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. The agency must improve the quality of the recording of these meetings and ensure that supervisory visits take place monthly. (NMS 21.8)
- Ensure that individual, written risk assessments are undertaken to address any known vulnerabilities for each child effectively and set out what action should be taken to address the risks. These plans should evidence that risks of harm are reduced. (Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): Independent fostering agencies (2017), page 10)
- Ensure that foster carers are trained in the management and administration of medication. (NMS 6.10)
- Ensure that each panel member's performance, including the chair, is reviewed annually against agreed performance objectives. (Volume 4, page 41, paragraph 5.15)
- Improve management monitoring systems to ensure that information needed to ensure compliance with the agency's policies and procedures is readily available and in an accessible form. (NMS 25.2)
- Ensure that case records clearly reflect children's lives and the work that is undertaken with them. (Social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): Independent fostering agencies (2017), page 14)

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Foster carers work with passion and commitment to ensure that young people are welcomed into their families and receive high standards of care. They provide genuine love and care. Young people speak highly of the positive and meaningful relationships they have with their foster carers.

Young people thrive in secure, stable family homes. They make progress in education, develop healthier routines and benefit from clear boundaries.

Foster carers consistently praised the high levels of support provided by agency staff. They commented that staff 'go above and beyond' to provide extra support when it is needed. They described the agency as 'a family'. There are effective foster carer support groups to share concerns and good practice. Regular supervision is provided by experienced, qualified supervising social workers who know the foster families and the young people well. However, recording of supervision is not consistent in terms of quality or frequency. Not all records clearly evidence how the agency is supporting the foster carer to help young people make progress.

Foster carers work with skill and compassion to support young people to have contact with their birth families. In one example, a foster carer developed an excellent relationship with a young person's mother. This enabled them to share aspects of his care and resulted in a realistic, thoughtful plan for the young person to return home.

Young people enjoy a range of constructive and positive activities within their foster families and the local community. The agency organises trips and events that include all of the children and young people living in the family.

Children and young people with complex health needs are carefully matched to ensure that their needs are met. Foster carers ensure that young people attend all healthcare appointments and that healthcare plans are reviewed as and when required. Foster carers advocate strongly within the professional network to make sure that young people get the support and resources they need to thrive. Foster carers administer medication to young people as prescribed, but have not received any training in this area. This runs the risk that practice in this area is not given sufficient attention to ensure that standards are consistently maintained.

Young people are only placed if the agency is confident that the foster families can meet their needs and keep them safe. Matching considerations take into account the needs of young people already living in the home. Foster carers commented that they are given time to consider referrals and that they are 'never pressured to say yes'. Very few placements end in an unplanned way and if this happens, the agency keeps the needs of the young person at the centre of planning placement moves.

The agency does not have access to in-house provision in relation to providing

support from child and adolescent mental health specialists. They access these services from placing authorities. This ensures that they can provide informed care and interventions for young people who have complex emotional needs.

Young people are provided with opportunities to learn independence skills according to their abilities and needs. In one example, a placing social worker commented that a young person had made remarkable progress in learning to travel independently. He described how the foster carer had carefully assessed the risks and provided a stepped plan to enable him to safely travel and become more independent in the community.

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

Young people are safe. The leadership and management team promotes a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the agency. Robust checks and assessments ensure that only people who are suitable to foster are approved as foster carers. The fostering panel provides close scrutiny and effective quality assurance, to ensure that standards are maintained and that foster carers remain fit to practise.

Foster carers understand the risks and vulnerabilities in relation to each young person. They provide safe care to manage risks and report a high level of support from agency staff when challenging situations occur. However, individual written risk assessments are not consistently completed. This runs the risk that areas of vulnerability are missed or that plans in place to reduce risks are not explicit. In practice, foster carers and the agency staff are vigilant and provide safe care.

Young people are generally well behaved and make safer choices because of living in caring, stable family homes. They seldom go missing and when they do, foster carers are proactive and follow agency procedures to secure their safe return.

All agency staff and foster carers undertake regular face-to-face training in key areas of child protection. They are alert to concerns in relation to risks of exploitation, risks of using the internet and risks in relation to radicalisation. They also undertake specialist training in managing challenging behaviour safely. They understand the impact on young people of trauma and loss and how this may affect young people as a result of their previous experiences. They use this understanding to provide sensitive, thoughtful interventions to help young people feel safe and cared for.

Young people know how to raise concerns and feel that adults listen to their worries. The agency investigates all complaints objectively and where appropriate in partnership with local safeguarding professionals. The agency considers the experiences and opinions of young people to inform foster carers' learning and development plans.

Staff are recruited in line with safe recruitment procedures. All checks on staff, foster carers and others who have unsupervised contact with young people are regularly updated.

Placing social workers consistently praise the professionalism of the supervising

social workers. They report that agency staff work effectively in partnership with them, share information appropriately and that they provide safe care.

The agency decision-maker is very experienced in his role. He carefully scrutinises all available information to ensure that foster carers are suitable and provide safe care for young people.

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

The registered manager is a qualified social worker and holds a level 5 qualification in leadership and management. She is an experienced professional and has been managing the agency for 15 years.

The registered manager leads by example and is 'hands-on' with social work practice. She has a good understanding of the strengths of the agency and areas for development. She knows the staff, foster carers and young people well. She keeps the interests of young people at the heart of decision-making. She has high expectations and maintains high standards of care.

Staff and foster carers describe the manager as being supportive and accessible. She is able to work collaboratively with agency staff, but if standards of care fall below expectations, she does not shy away from difficult conversations. She undertakes regular formal supervision with staff and completes annual appraisals for staff. This ensures that staff maintain high standards and have clear development plans. She manages the team effectively. The team meets frequently to share concerns, reflect on practice and to develop strategies for supporting foster carers and young people.

The registered manager is respected within the professional network. She advocates strongly for children and young people to ensure that care planning is effective and that young people have a positive experience of care. However, case records are fragmented and do not always reflect the excellent practice and thoughtful interventions that often help young people to make excellent progress.

A number of shortfalls in relation to record-keeping were identified at this inspection. This indicates that monitoring and quality assurance systems in place to ensure that the agency complies with its own policies and procedures are not effective. These shortfalls are mitigated in part by the excellent standards of care and the positive progress that young people are making. This does, however, run the risk of missing opportunities to maintain and improve practice.

The responsible individual is highly visible within the agency and works effectively in partnership with the registered manager. They deliver and sustain an inclusive culture and have a strong ethos of celebrating diversity. Management decisions come from a strong, ethical value base and are centred firmly on supporting foster carers to provide high-quality placements for children and young people.

## **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:** SC057262

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## **Inspector**

Lee Kirwin, social care inspector





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