

Welcome Foster Care

First floor, Boardman House, 64 Broadway, London E15 1NT
Monitoring visit
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency provides short-term, emergency, parent-and-child and long-term placements. The agency has 49 fostering households, and 52 children were in placement.

The registered manager went on maternity leave in September 2018. The deputy manager has been acting up as the manager for the service since then.

The agency has applied to voluntarily cancel its registration from 1 January 2019. The plan is for all foster carers and staff to transfer to the parent fostering agency that took over the ownership of Welcome Foster Care in 2015.

Inspection date: 18 October 2018

Date of previous inspection: 20 July 2015

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken to address specific concerns received by Ofsted. The concerns that were shared with Ofsted relate to:

- the assessment of foster carers
- the accommodation for foster children
- a previous assessment of suitability for one fostering household
- reviews of a foster carer's approval after a placement breakdown.

The visit focused on the arrangements for initial and continued approval of foster carers and the contribution of these arrangements to providing children with safe foster care placements.

The main finding is that no regulatory breaches have been identified.

The leaders and managers of the agency were already aware of some weaknesses in regard to the recruitment and approval of foster carers, and had taken appropriate steps to secure improved fostering practices.

The agency has an effective fostering panel that contributes to the robustness of the decisions made in relation to the suitability of foster carers. The agency's decision-maker explains clearly and in writing the basis for the decisions that they have made.

The agency presents standardised assessment documentation to the fostering panel. The assessment includes all the required checks and a medical assessment by the prospective foster carer's medical practitioner. Any medical issues, past and present, are explored further as part of the assessment and at the fostering panel, with a particular focus on the prospective foster carer's ability to foster.

The agency and its fostering panel can access additional medical advice if needed. Each allocated supervising social worker monitors each approved foster carer's physical and mental health through regular visits to the fostering household. The records of these visits clearly evidence this.

Both the fostering panel and the agency have clear expectations in relation to the accommodation required for fostering, and these are in line with good fostering practice. A foster family is not approved unless it has a spare bedroom. If a child sleeps in the same bedroom as their parent, the child still has to have a bedroom of their own.

The fostering panel requires sight of a certificate of building regulations for the fostering household, including for any alterations made to the building. The registered manager has written to those foster carers who, in the past, were approved without providing this certificate, asking them to send it in.

The agency carries out an annual health and safety inspection of each fostering household. Each supervising social worker's regular monitoring visits also contribute to ensuring that the fostering home environment is safe.

The acting manager acknowledged that a particular fostering assessment that had been completed four years ago did not explore all the issues that the agency would have liked. Although the assessment did provide all the required information, it lacked detail and analysis of one foster carer's capacity to foster. The agency has continued to monitor the suitability of this foster carer through regular supervisory visits and formal annual reviews. There have been no concerns over the quality of care that the foster carer has provided.

The agency has a reflective practice approach to reviewing the effectiveness of placements. The foster carers and supervising social workers reflect on the quality of each placement after it has ended. This enables them to identify what worked well and whether there are any learning points for the foster carers or the agency. When deemed necessary, an unplanned placement ending can trigger an urgent review of

the foster carers' ability to continue to foster.

As all foster families are due to transfer to the parent company from January 2019, the leaders and managers have allocated an independent social worker/reviewing officer to review the continued approval of each foster carer. These updated reports will be presented to the fostering panel and will address any weaknesses in past assessments. The panel chair reported that the quality of assessments and reviews presented to the panel has continued to improve.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to address specific concerns received by Ofsted.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC364846

Registered provider: Welcome Foster Care Limited

Registered provider address: Wootton Chase, Wootton St Lawrence,
Basingstoke, Hampshire RG23 8PE

Responsible individual: Alison Sargent

Inspector

Seka Graovac, social care inspector

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