

Pilgrims Corner Fostering Ltd

Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

Suite 5, Enterprise House, The Links, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 7GQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency currently has six fostering households caring for two children and two parent and child placements. Another young person and one parent and child placement are accommodated under the 'staying put' arrangements.

The agency has recruited one fostering household within the last year and is currently assessing two more.

The agency offers short-term, long-term, respite, emergency and parent and child placements.

There is an acting manager in post who is not yet registered.

Inspection dates: 29 October to 2 November 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: 23 October 2014

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Fostering families feel welcomed by the agency and said that their training leaves them well prepared to understand children's needs.
- The agency places a high priority on ensuring the correct match between children and their fostering family. This leads to long-term, secure placements.
- Fostering families receive high-quality support. Children develop strong and trusting relationships with supporting social workers, who regularly visit them and see them alone.
- Foster carers are encouraged to provide respite within their own family networks, thus ensuring that children feel included in the family.
- Safeguarding children is given a high priority. All fostering families have two unannounced visits a year.
- Foster carers are given good support to complete their standard training and to attend further training on relevant issues.
- The agency has systems in place to ensure that regular checks and reviews are up to date.
- The agency can offer children educational and therapeutic support if needed.
- The agency has an experienced and diverse panel that offers a good-quality gatekeeping and feedback service.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency has not had a registered manager since November 2016, despite having managers in post. The management arrangements have not had an effect on the care given to children but have slowed the growth of the agency.
- The agency did not have a correct registration certificate on display.
- Panel members' appraisals are inconsistent, and some members feel they require additional safeguarding training.
- The agency has not sent quality of care reports to the regulator at the required frequency.

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 the Chief Inspector 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))	31/03/2019
The registered person must display a certificate of registration, as it is an offence not to do so. (Section 28 Care Standards Act 2000)	30/11/2018

Recommendations

- Ensure that assessment and appraisal of all staff involved in fostering work takes account of identified skills needed for particular roles and is used to identify individuals' learning and development needs. This is specifically in relation to panel members' appraisals and safeguarding training. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 23.5). This is specifically in relation to panel members' appraisals and safeguarding training.
- Ensure that the registered person has a system in place to notify, within 24 hours, persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with regulation 36. Ensure that the system includes what to do where a notifiable event arises at the weekend. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 29.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children looked after by this agency receive good-quality care and build trusted and secure relationships with their foster families and the agency's supervising social worker. A strength of this agency is its commitment to ensuring that it matches the right children with the right families who can meet their needs. Children have said that they feel included in their foster family and their foster family's extended networks. This provides children with a sense of belonging and stability.

Foster carers feel valued and supported by the agency. They like the agency because it is small and has a 'family' feel. Foster carers feel well prepared for the task of fostering and think that the training helps them understand the 'worst case scenario'. This has helped them to better understand behaviours children may present.

The supervising social worker carries out a high number of support visits, including at least two unannounced visits during the year. Foster carers attend reviews, personal education plan meetings and various other meetings. They are very much seen as part of the team of professionals involved in the care of the children they look after.

Children make good progress from their starting points. Placements are stable and offer children good security and care. Children make good progress in school attendance and participation, improved self-care skills, gaining apprenticeships, enjoying positive contacts, leading a healthy lifestyle and learning how to live independently.

Children are encouraged to be independent, to make choices and to participate in decisions. Children are encouraged to participate in completing reports, signing consent forms, sharing their views and are supported to complain. Children are provided with information when they are welcomed to the agency. They are given a children's guide which tells them about the agency, what to expect, useful contact numbers for advocates and what to do if they wish to make a complaint. When placements are planned children can see foster carers' handbooks, which include pictures of foster carers and their homes, so that children know what to expect before they arrive at their foster placement.

Children are treated as individuals and offered dignity and respect throughout their time staying with their foster carers. All the actions of the agency are aimed at improving children's confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. This is achieved via a holistic approach, ensuring that children are well matched, well cared for, given the support they need to progress and included within their foster families.

Where it is appropriate, young people are encouraged to 'stay put' with their foster carers. The agency puts children's needs first and actively supports them staying with carers where this is the best option to meet their needs. Other young people

have been well supported to move into semi-independent lodgings in line with their pathway plans.

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

Children feel safe and that they are included as part of their foster family. Foster carers and supervising social workers ensure that basic health and safety checks are completed and updated. Risk assessments are completed in partnership with foster carers, placing authorities, children and parents to ensure that any risks are minimised. Children are supported to take appropriate risks in agreed and planned ways to help them to learn self-care and safety skills.

Social workers and foster carers understand the processes to follow if children go missing from their placement. All foster carers can access the local protocols for children who go missing from home and care. Foster carers have 24-hour access to a duty worker who can give them advice and support over the telephone. Clear planning and collaborative working with involved professionals has helped to reduce risks such as child sexual exploitation. Foster carers, staff and managers understand the procedures to follow when children go missing and what to do when they return to their placement. The placing authority and the police are appropriately contacted. The number of children who go missing is low. However, when required, return home interviews are arranged quickly.

Children are supported to speak out about any form of discrimination or bullying. Foster carers all receive training about the 'Prevent' strategy to help them to understand the potential for children who may be targeted for any form of radicalisation. Foster carers receive safeguarding training during their preparation and this is regularly updated to include new thematic concerns and to ensure that they understand their role in child protection.

Clear expectations are in place for appropriate behaviours. Children said that they trust the adults who are caring for them and felt their foster carers were fair and helped to keep them safe. One child said, 'If I had a problem, I'd go to [names of foster carers].' Where children and young people display difficulties, support and help is commissioned from the child and adolescent mental health services, external psychologist/psychotherapist or any other suitable resource. Foster carers are helped to understand the source of behaviours, through their preparation training and ongoing standards and development training.

The agency is aware of safe recruitment practice and understands the need to ensure that appropriate checks and safeguards are in place to protect children from adults who may seek to harm them. Recruitment, assessment, preparation and training for foster carers has a strong focus on keeping children safe. Foster carers are trained in safe caring and all households have safer caring plans in place which are regularly reviewed. Unannounced visits take place at least once a year, and usually twice a year.

The agency has a strong safeguarding policy which is easy to understand and gives clear guidance to staff and carers about what to do in the event of a child protection

concern. There is a safeguarding lead within the agency and the staff are familiar with the designated officer for the host local authority. There have not been any recent child protection incidents. Incidents are accurately recorded and appropriately managed. One incident seen during the inspection should have been notified to the regulator, however this shortfall did not negatively affect children's safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The senior leaders and managers are passionate about the service they provide. The agency is very personal to them and they wish to ensure that it retains a small family ethos.

The agency has had some difficulties retaining managers and has not had a registered manager for a two-year period. This has been a key line of enquiry for this inspection. However, the turnover of recent managers has not been down to any internal reasons, but due to external factors beyond the agency's control. Despite the lack of a consistent manager, there has been no obvious impact on the service provided to children or the support offered to foster carers. Rather, the impact has been on the agency's lack of growth and development in recruiting new foster carers.

There is now an acting manager in post who, despite not having previous experience as a registered manager, has experience of working in an independent fostering agency and experience as a mentor/supervisor in other roles. She has been in post for one month and has very quickly understood the agency and started to make positive changes. The senior leaders and managers are facilitating an external supervisor/consultant to support the acting manager.

Leaders and managers are very 'hands on' within the agency, and they know all the carers and the children well. They understand children's care plans and are supportive in ensuring that children get the resources they need to make progress, such as educational input, psychological input, respite and any other services to help meet their individual needs.

Leaders and managers are proactive and work well with placing authorities, professionals and parents to ensure that children settle well and get what they need to make progress. Where this is not forthcoming, leaders and managers are good advocates on behalf of children and their carers to ensure that suitable plans and arrangements are in place.

Leaders and managers provide a good structure of induction, probation and supervision. All the staff said they felt well supported and that managers were accessible and approachable. Appraisals have not been consistently completed for all panel members, however the new manager is beginning this process to ensure that all appraisals are updated in a timely way. Some of the panel members' responses to the Ofsted survey indicated they would like refresher safeguarding training, and this is now booked for February 2019.

The acting manager has begun the process of monitoring the quality of care since

her arrival and these reports were available during the inspection. However, no quality of care reports have been sent to the regulator for some time, which is a breach of regulation, and a requirement is made to improve this area of practice. The acting manager has completed various audits of both foster carers' and children's files. This is helping the agency to understand practice strengths and areas for development.

The agency panel is effective in gatekeeping and providing feedback to the agency on the quality of assessments and reporting. The panel chair is experienced, measured and sensitive in her approach. Assessments and reviews are completed in a timely way and are given proper scrutiny by the panel. The panel is diverse and quorate, with good administration which is ensuring that recommendations and reasons are correctly recorded.

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: SC376060

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Responsible individual: Sarah Norman

Registered manager: Post vacant

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Inspector

Christine Kennet, social care inspector



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