

# Time For Children

Time For Children Limited

1 Cambridge Park, London E11 2PU

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is part of a group of companies owned by Futures for Children. The agency specialises in providing short- and long-term placements for sibling groups. However, it also accepts single placements. The agency has 19 fostering households and is currently providing placements for 35 children.

**Inspection dates:** 3 to 7 December 2018

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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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:** 7 December 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 flourish within nurturing and stable placements. They are happier, more confident, have increased self-esteem and a sense of belonging.
- The agency excels in its ability to provide long-term placements to children. Most children have lived with their foster carers for over four years.
- Foster carers express great pride in children's personal growth, recognising their talents and encouraging their strengths.
- Children are cared for by skilled and well-qualified foster carers who are good advocates for children. Foster carers demonstrate caring professionalism, insightfulness and emotional intelligence.
- Children's experiences are actively broadened through a wide range of social activities. Individualised support is also available from a dedicated support worker.
- Children, foster carers and staff benefit from the agency's family-style atmosphere. Staff and foster carers appreciate the level of professional and personal support.
- This is an inclusive agency where children contribute towards staff recruitment, activity planning and the development of the agency.
- Children benefit from good safeguarding arrangements. An extensive range of checks helps to ensure that unsuitable people do not work with them.
- Currently, no children go missing from care, are involved in criminal activity or are engaged in sexually exploitative relationships.
- The agency is led by experienced and enthusiastic leaders and managers. Foster carers like the visible leadership and management and they feel listened to.
- The agency is innovatively involved in Coram BAAF activity days with the London Borough of Southwark. This enables children moving out of residential care to move into suitable fostering placements.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Staff must actively address children's needs once they have been identified. An example is promptly registering children with a dentist and an optician.
- The agency should consider informal learning opportunities for children who are placed without an established education plan.
- Foster carers should follow the agency's record-keeping policy. Children's records should be non-stigmatising.
- Decision making by the agency decision maker must be within the recommended timescales.

## 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
<p>Education, employment and leisure activities</p> <p>The fostering service provider must— provide foster parents with such information and assistance, including equipment, as may be necessary to meet the educational needs of children placed with them. (Regulation 16 (2)(c))</p>	01/02/2019

### Recommendations

- Ensure the prospective foster carer receives written confirmation of the decision maker's decision within five working days. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 14.10)
  - Management of the service must ensure all staff's work and all fostering activity is consistent with the 2011 regulations and NMS and the service's policies and procedures. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', NMS 25.3)
- In particular, ensure that there is proactive consideration of children's needs, prompt registration with health professionals and that foster carers' records sensitively describe children's behaviour.

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are thriving within stable and nurturing placements, which are responsive to their needs. Children are happier, more confident and develop increased social skills. A foster carer said that their child was like a new person. A placing social worker said that, 'The carers have fully and holistically met the needs of the children by being proactive and observant to their needs.'

Children have a good record of educational attendance. The agency recognises children's educational and personal achievements and has access to an educational consultant when needed. However, for one child, there was a lack of educational structure when they were first placed with carers.

An outcome tracker system efficiently monitors children's progress. All foster carers highlighted their pride in children's progress and the fact that children are exceeding initial expectations. Foster carers contribute positively to children's life story work by collecting certificates, photographs and mementos.

Children quickly make positive attachments and they feel part of their foster family. Children fondly refer to their foster carers as relatives, in one case describing them as an angel. Foster carers are committed to their roles, and this dedication helps to give children a sense of belonging.

A significant strength of the agency is placement stability. Most placements are long-term and many children have lived with their foster carers for over four years. Where possible, siblings are placed together or within the agency. This enables siblings to maintain meaningful contact with each other.

Children benefit from good matching arrangements. Most placements are culturally reflective, which helps to strengthen children's personal identity. Foster carers and staff have a good understanding of equality and diversity, which enables children to develop a positive self-view.

Children's experiences are widened through social activities organised by the agency. They socialise together at events such as trips to the seaside and trampolining. This enables children to bond and to develop friendships through their shared experiences.

Foster carers help to recognise children's talents, enabling children to follow their interests and to engage in activities which build on their strengths. This helps with children's personal development, emotional resilience and self-esteem. A social worker praised the fact that their child had 'opportunities to maximise her potential'.

Children receive individualised and collective support from the agency's dedicated support worker. The needs of the foster carer's birth children are also considered. They are invited to activities and their involvement is celebrated.

Children's views are valued. They contribute towards staff recruitment, activity planning and the development of agency documentation. An example of the latter is a child helping to translate the children's guide into another language. Regular consultation processes enable children to influence agency practice.

Foster carers sensitively assist children to move to alternative placements, such as adoption. Older children benefit from a smooth transition into adulthood. They learn independent living skills and receive relevant guidance from their foster carers. Older children can also remain living with their foster carers under staying put arrangements. Other children maintain their relationships once they move on, providing them with valued, ongoing support.

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

Children feel safe and they benefit from good safeguarding arrangements. Foster carers receive comprehensive guidance on internet safety and how to protect children in the digital age. Foster carers are updated on the latest apps, social media and gaming issues and children learn how to keep themselves safe.

Children can identify a trusted adult they can talk to about any concerns. Within their foster homes, children feel safe enough to talk about their personal histories and disclose issues of neglect and abuse.

Risks to children are identified, understood and successfully managed. Children benefit from consistent and firm boundaries, which help them to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Children are calmer and there are no longer issues with self-harm.

Children enjoy living with their foster carers. There are no issues with children going missing or them being involved in criminal or sexual exploitation. Positive reinforcement encourages good behaviour. Children learn to apologise and to reflect on their actions. They also learn to self-regulate and to manage their emotions.

The agency has comprehensive safeguarding procedures which cover a wide range of issues. Foster carers and staff benefit from wide-ranging safeguarding training. Training has raised their awareness of current issues relating to gangs and county lines, female genital mutilation and preventing radicalisation. Leaders and managers are currently sourcing training to address issues concerning faith-based abuse.

Children receive protection from the agency's procedures, which help to ensure that unsuitable people do not work with them. Where there are significant issues with foster carers, leaders and managers appropriately deregister these individuals and make referrals to the disclosure and barring service. There is a thorough recruitment process, which includes additional checks to help safeguard children. These include social media checks on prospective staff and foster carers.

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

This is an agency which is continually evolving. The small, family-feel of the agency enables all staff to have an in-depth knowledge of the service, children and foster carers. Leaders and managers demonstrate a passionate energy which is focused on solutions and providing a quality service for children. A social worker praised the 'excellent care' provided by the agency.

Shortfalls are minor and they do not have a detrimental impact on children's outcomes. Leaders and managers are aware of the agency's strengths and areas requiring development. During the inspection, they promptly addressed minor issues. The responsible individual who is also the agency decision maker, takes pride in making decisions which are in children's best interests. However, decisions are not always made within the required timescale. A new decision maker has been appointed, to address this issue.

On one occasion, a child was not promptly registered with a dentist and an optician. This was addressed during the inspection. Also, despite having recording training and guidance, phrases such as 'kicking off' were used to describe children's behaviour.

The agency has a new, highly experienced manager who has a clear and realistic vision for the agency's future. There is good continuity for the agency, as this individual is the former panel chair.

The agency has a good development plan, which includes focusing on placement stability, addressing secondary trauma and developing a mental health first aid responder system.

The agency is innovatively involved in Coram BAAF activity days with the London Borough of Southwark. This enables children moving out of residential care to move into suitable fostering placements.

The fostering panel demonstrates an integrated approach to ensuring the best outcomes for children. Central list members have a range of expertise, including social work and health and legal professionals. The panel chair is an experienced social worker and foster carer. The fostering panel constructively contributes to improvements within the agency.

There is a good-quality assurance system in place. Leaders and managers evaluate the service in accordance with regulations. Regular meetings focus on monitoring the positive impact that interventions have on children's lives. Leaders and managers regularly monitor placement stability. Leaders and managers actively challenge local authorities to provide the necessary documentation to fully address each child's identified needs.

Children receive high-quality care from dedicated, skilled foster carers. Foster carers are strong advocates for children. They demonstrate caring professionalism, insightfulness and emotional intelligence. Local authority social workers commended

the good working relationships with foster carers. A social worker said that their placemen was 'one of the best' and this is 'what good foster care should be'.

Foster carers are well supported in their roles. They have access to: therapy, extensive training, regular supervisory visits, respite, support groups and a 24-hour on-call system. Foster carers commented on the outstanding support that the agency provides. They receive help with developing their reflective thinking and applying a therapeutic approach to parenting.

All long-standing foster carers have successfully completed their vocational training, which competently equips them for their roles. Foster carers' learning and development plans are centred on child-focused principles.

Children benefit from an experienced, well-qualified, culturally diverse staff team. The staff team members' skills are further enhanced by a wide range of training, reflective supervision and appraisals which focus on their personal development. New staff also benefit from a comprehensive induction program.

Foster carers and staff feel cared for. Both groups commented on being supported professionally and personally. Foster carers like the visible leadership and management. They feel listened to. Foster carers stated that they received 'brilliant advice and support'.

All of the recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed. Children's views are now taken into account in developing the fostering service. There is an effective foster carer recruitment strategy. All allegations are reported to the local authority and the new manager is enrolled on the appropriate management qualification course.

## **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:** SC047163

**Registered provider:** Time For Children Limited

**Registered provider address:** Time For Children Limited, The Masters House & College Tower, College Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6YQ

**Responsible individual:** Nicholas Barnsby

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

**Telephone number:** 020 8983 3811

**Email address:** [admin@timeforchildren.org](mailto:admin@timeforchildren.org)

## **Inspector**

Sharon Payne: social care inspector





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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
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