

Red Kite Fostering

Red Kite Fostering Limited

The Old Surgery, The Meads, Kington, Herefordshire HR5 3DQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Red Kite Fostering is a private limited company based in Herefordshire. It also has access to premises in Telford that provide a more accessible base for training for carers who live in the West Midlands. The agency provides a range of fostering placements, including long-term, short-term, emergency and respite placements.

At the time of the inspection, the agency was providing placements for 20 children. It had 24 fostering households, of which three provided respite care only. The agency recruited four fostering households during this inspection year.

Inspection dates: 18 to 22 February 2019

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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

Date of last inspection: 3 November 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 make good progress because of the high-quality care and support received from committed and skilled foster carers.
- Placement stability is a strength, and children develop a sense of belonging because they live with their foster carers for a significant period of time and become part of the family. Good matching is an important contributory factor in placement stability.
- Children's participation is good, and they are involved with the agency in developing child-friendly booklets and information. They also take part in many activities organised by the agency that provide them with positive experiences.
- Foster carers are well trained and well supported by committed and skilful supervising social workers and the manager.
- Robust safeguarding practice protects children from harm.
- The manager knows the children well and wants the best for them. Professional relationships are good, but this does not prevent effective challenge when necessary.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Foster carers should have their expenses paid promptly and they should be provided with an annual statement and payslips.
- Formal monitoring systems need to be more evaluative and be used to drive improvement.
- Some aspects of the fostering panel and decision-making process require improvement. These include more independence in the operation of the panel, an annual training day with staff from the agency, appraisal of the panel chair by the agency decision-maker and the registration of the decision-maker as a social worker.
- The agency must ensure that the decision about a foster carer's suitability is made within 12 months of the previous decision.

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>(1) The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>(a) monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and</p> <p>(b) improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>(2) 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.</p> <p>(3) The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, regulation 35(1)(a)(b)(2)(3))</p>	26/04/2019

Recommendations

- Fostering panels should be multi-disciplinary bodies with a considerable element of independence from the fostering service. (The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 4: Fostering services, page 38, paragraph 5.2). This relates to potential conflicts of interests for the social worker panel member.
- Each person on the central list should be given the opportunity of attending an annual joint training day with the fostering service's fostering staff. (Fostering services: National minimum standard, 23.10)
- Each panel member's performance, including that of the chair, should be reviewed annually against agreed performance objectives. The service's decision-maker should review the performance of the panel chair, and for this purpose may attend a proportion of panel meetings but only as an observer. Views about the chair's performance should be sought from other panel members and from those who attend panel meetings, such as prospective foster carers and social workers who present reports to the panel. For all other panel members, the panel chair should conduct the performance review. (The Children Act 1989 guidance

and regulations volume 4: Fostering services, page 41, paragraph 5.15)

- The fostering service's decision-maker should be a senior person within the fostering service, or a trustee or director of the fostering service who is a social worker with at least 3 years post-qualifying experience in childcare social work and has knowledge of childcare law and practice. (Fostering services: National minimum standard, 23.12). This relates to the decision-maker not being on the social worker register.
- Approval of all foster carers must be reviewed, and a decision about suitability made, within a year of approval, and thereafter whenever it is felt necessary, but at intervals of no more than 12 months. (Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services, page 18)
- Payments of allowances and any fees paid should be made promptly at the agreed time and foster carers should be provided with a statement of payment at the end of each tax year. (Fostering services: National minimum standard, 28.2)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress and have positive experiences that improve their life chances. A significant factor in this progress is having placement stability, with over 66% of the children having lived with their current foster carers for over a year. This has a positive impact on children's emotional well-being and sense of belonging. Staying put arrangements are supported, as are special guardianship applications, even though this may mean the loss of a fostering place for the agency. Unplanned endings are rare, and when placements end for a child-centred reason, moves to a new placement are well planned so that the child moves on in a positive way. When children leave a placement, they receive a bound book that contains photographs of their time in foster care. This ensures that children are able to take with them positive memories.

Children receive high-quality individualised care and support from their foster carers. One independent reviewing officer commented, 'The carers are excellent.' The agency works with the foster carers to devise a foster carer plan that is detailed and covers all aspects of the child's needs. This provides the foster carers with clear written guidance about how they can meet the child's needs and how the agency will support the carers in this.

Children make good educational progress. They all have school or college places and their attendance is excellent. Foster carers understand the importance of education and support children well. This is borne out by comments from education providers. One said: 'The foster carer is very supportive. There is great communication between home and school.' A young person reinforced this by saying: 'My foster carer supports me really well in my studies and encourages me.'

Children have good health. This is monitored through monthly carer supervision, and records are maintained with details of any appointments, accidents and consultations.

Foster carers are committed to the children and they are justifiably proud of the children's progress and achievements. One young person in a long-term placement said: 'I've drastically improved as a person. I get along with people more, I'm not afraid to talk and I trust a lot more. It is pretty good that I met my foster carer.' Other professionals have also recognised the progress that children are making. One senior social care professional, commenting about a child who has complex needs, said: 'He is thriving in their care. Their passion for the child and calm consideration of what is best for him came through in everything I saw and talked to them about.'

Children have positive experiences, both with their foster carers and with the agency. Children are part of the foster carers' families and involved in events such as holidays, weddings and parties. They are encouraged to develop their interests, such as going to the gym, cooking, swimming and climbing. The agency provides a number of activities throughout the year, including a residential trip to Scotland. One

young person spoke very fondly about his experiences in Scotland and how it has benefited him. He said: 'It helped me learn about others and interact with them. You learn about teamwork and make friends. It helps you get along with other young people.'

The family support worker is a valuable and flexible resource to support children and their carers. He has helped young people gain independence skills, such as the use of public transport. He also takes children on activities, and he uses the opportunities so that children can talk to him about any worries.

Children give their suggestions and views about the activities. They also have their own newsletter that details their achievements and the agency's events, and it includes puzzles and recipes.

Prospective foster carers feel welcomed when they contact the agency. The preparation, assessment and approval process helps to ensure that they understand the fostering task and that they are equipped with the skills to meet the needs of children placed with them. This is enhanced by regular training, support and supervision.

Matching is a priority. Carers are not pressurised into taking children whose needs they cannot meet. This is borne out by the longevity of placements and the positive outcomes that children have. Children have improved the welcome book so that it is more child friendly and individualised. For example, a child from another country had 'welcome' written in her first language. The welcome book provides children with the information that they need to understand about being in foster care, and who they can contact if there are any concerns. Children have a direct line to the manager so that they can raise any concerns or suggestions with him.

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

Children are protected from harm because carers understand their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe, and they know what to do in the event of an incident, accident or emergency. Risk is assessed well, and all children have detailed, individual, up-to-date risk assessments which complement the foster carers' safer caring plans. These documents provide foster carers with appropriate guidance and information so that they can keep children as safe as possible. Carers are recruited safely, and they have regular and appropriate training in all aspects of safeguarding. Currently children are not engaging in risk-taking behaviour.

The home environment is assessed annually through an updated health and safety risk assessment and fire safety plan to ensure that any risks are identified and minimised.

The agency has developed a new initiative to offer a comprehensive programme of specific online training to children. This includes issues such as self-harm, bullying, drug and alcohol misuse, and keeping safe online.

The agency has a no-restraint policy. Carers have training in positive behaviour

management to equip them with the skills to de-escalate situations and develop alternative strategies. They are also trained in therapeutic parenting. This provides foster carers with a better understanding of why a child may behave in a certain way and how they can respond in a way that is empathetic and supportive.

The manager understands his responsibilities when there are allegations or concerns about carers' practice. He involves the designated officer for the relevant local authority and follows the advice given. Carers are taken back to panel for an early review to consider their ongoing suitability. The agency acts robustly to ensure that foster carers remain suitable to foster.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The agency is managed by a well-qualified, committed and child-focused manager who is extremely passionate about achieving the best outcomes for children. He is actively involved in many aspects of the agency, such as supervising a small number of fostering households and undertaking initial visits and foster carer assessments. While this ensures that he is fully aware of what is going on and is very much the face of the agency, some aspects of leadership and management have slipped as a result. These have not had an impact on the well-being of children, but they need to be addressed.

The manager knows the children well and he understands the progress that they are making. This has been enhanced by the monthly information supplied by foster carers that relates to children's progress and well-being. He undertakes regular audits of the files and highlights points for action. He provides quantitative information as part of his review of the service. However, this is not evaluated, he does not use the results of consultation or feedback with children, carers or other professionals, and it is not used to inform the development of the service. This is a missed opportunity for improvement.

There is a small but long-standing team of supervising social workers. This provides consistency to the carers and the children whom the social workers support. Staff feel well supported by the manager. They are regularly supervised, they have an annual appraisal to look at their professional development and they have access to training.

Professional relationships are good. There is good communication between children's social workers and the agency. Supervising social workers attend and contribute well to children's statutory reviews and they provide a written report. One social worker commented: 'It has been a pleasure working with you.'

The manager is not afraid to challenge when he feels that professional practice has not been in the best interest of children. For example, he supported foster carers to challenge a placement move for a child in their care when this was against the child's expressed wishes.

Case records are child-focused. Children's case records contain lots of photographs

and evidence of their progress and achievements during their time at the foster placement. One particularly good piece of practice is the children's contribution to their statutory review. Each child provides a book of photographs charting their progress and experiences over the past six months. This ensures that their contribution is meaningful and provides other professionals with a realistic and child-focused account of the time between reviews.

Foster carers are supervised regularly and have access to relevant training of a high quality. All have completed their training and development standards within a year or are in the process of doing so. Reviews, although thorough, are currently conducted by the supervising social worker; this is not best practice as it lacks independence and objectivity. Consideration needs to be given to the timing of the review as the decision about suitability must be made within 12 months of the previous decision.

Foster carers have raised a number of concerns about the payment of expenses and the lack of payslips or an annual statement. If this is not resolved, this may have an impact on whether or not they remain with the agency.

The fostering panel provides good oversight to the work of the agency. The panel chair is experienced and has the appropriate skills and knowledge. The panel membership provides a diverse range of professional experience, and this is in the process of being enhanced by the addition of a foster carer and someone with health expertise. However, the agency's supervising social workers are panel members, and this diminishes the independence of the panel. There has been one recent occasion when there was a clear conflict of interest that was not declared or acted on.

Current panel members are well established and work well together. However, they have not had an annual training day as recommended in the previous inspection. This recommendation is therefore repeated. They have an annual appraisal of their performance, but this is not written up and the panel chair has not been appraised by the agency decision-maker. These are missed opportunities for professional development.

The panel is administered well, members receive the papers in good time, and the minutes are written promptly and are of a good quality and reflect the discussions accurately. This contributes to good reflection and decision-making.

The agency decision-maker makes a considered decision promptly, taking into account all the information. However, he has not kept his social work registration up to date.

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: SC417504

Registered provider: Red Kite Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Rhos House, Old Radnor, Presteigne, Powys LD8 2RP

Responsible individual: Carole Barnes

Registered manager: Anthony Collier

Telephone number: 01544 231657

Email address: info@redkitefostering.co.uk

Inspector

Ros Chapman: social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2019