

Fostering UK

Fostering UK

Maple House, Potters Bar EN6 5BS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The registered office for this independent fostering agency is in Hertfordshire. The agency is recruiting carers from a broad geographical area, including London, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. At the time of this inspection, the agency had approved nine fostering households to care for 13 children. This agency does not yet support any young adults who are staying put. The manager registered when the service was registered by Ofsted in 2016.

Inspection dates: 4 to 8 March 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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: N/A

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children receive a warm welcome from their carers and from the agency staff.
- Children receive good help and support.
- Matching is well considered.
- Some children live with their brothers and sisters.
- All of the children attend school.
- Children have fun with their foster carers and the carers' extended families.
- Foster carers are motivated to provide continuity and nurturing experiences.
- Foster carers advocate for the children in their care.
- Foster carers benefit from good advice and reliable support from the agency.
- Foster carers have access to good, informative training.
- The panel chair and vice-chair have a significant amount of relevant experience in foster care.
- The rationale for agency decision-making about fitness to foster is clear.
- The founder, who is the registered manager, has a hands-on approach to ensuring that children and their carers have what they need.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Ensure that the foster panel has representation from the education profession.
- Ensure that initial assessments of foster carers provide a clear explanation for recommending any terms of approval.
- Ensure that each carer has a personal development plan, and that the effectiveness of the plan is reviewed by the agency.
- Ensure that children's records are helpful to children.

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>The fostering service must ensure that the fostering panel has sufficient members, and that individual members have between them the experience and expertise necessary to effectively discharge the functions of the panel. As far as is practicable, panel membership should reflect the issues under consideration, and so should, as appropriate include people with experience of fostering, education, short-break care, and family and friends care; be gender balanced; and reflect the diversity of the local community. ('Children Act 1989 Volume 4: Statutory guidance on fostering services for looked-after children', paragraph 5.8)</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the fostering panel includes people who have professional experience of education.</p>	31/05/2019

Recommendations

- Ensure prospective foster carers are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets the child's developmental needs. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.6)

In particular, this applies to recommending approval for more than one child.
- Ensure foster carers' development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that are appropriate to their developmental needs and experience. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.5)
- Ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.6)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is the agency's first inspection. The agency registered in 2016 and carer recruitment began in 2017. The first foster carer was approved in 2018. Some foster carers have transferred from other agencies and so are experienced. Some foster carers are new to fostering. The agency has already introduced a foster carer mentoring scheme, which means that newly approved foster carers receive additional advice, practical help and support from a peer.

Children receive a warm welcome from the agency. They are provided with a memory box and a personalised quilt. Careful matching ensures that the majority of children benefit from the stability and continuity of family-based experiences. Children are welcomed into their foster carers' wider family networks. The children benefit from positive and supportive relationships with their foster carers. The agency promotes a nurturing approach to caring for children. This encourages children to express their feelings and emotions, and leads to improved self-worth and emotional well-being.

All of the children attend school. Foster carers help children with homework. The agency encourages children to read, and purchases book tokens for every child. If, when a placement begins, a child is not in education or is struggling to engage in lessons, the child receives robust support and encouragement from their carer. This approach helps children to persevere and ensures a progressive focus on achievement in education so that children reach their learning potential.

Foster carers and their supervising social workers are good at sharing information and communicating with other agencies. The agency is proactive. It ensures that foster carers have access to good training to help them to meet the unique needs of every child. Foster carers are good advocates for the children. Children flourish because of the care that they receive.

A small number of children live with their brothers and sisters. Foster carers understand their responsibility to support local authority plans, whatever they may be. Foster carers help to ensure that children see their families and those who are significant to them. When necessary, foster carers help to prepare children to return home to live with their families.

Children have fun. They attend after-school clubs, take part in activities in the local community and go on holiday with their foster carers. The agency encourages foster carers to think proactively about children's futures. For example, a life-skills booklet encourages foster carers to spend time with children to identify the help that is likely to be needed in areas such as budgeting, accessing support and maintaining good health. This helps to prepare children effectively for leaving care.

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

A welcome letter from the registered manager and accessible children's guides help children to understand how to make a complaint or to approach trusted adults about their care arrangements.

There have been no complaints or allegations made about carers. Issues identified by other agencies, for example regarding standards of care practice, are dealt with swiftly and effectively by the registered manager.

Children do not go missing overnight. On the very rare occasions when individual children do not return home on time, carers respond proactively and appropriately. Carers seek advice from the agency and share information with the placing authority. Good out-of-office arrangements ensure that a member of staff is available to all of the foster carers at any time of the day or night.

Supervising social workers are in regular contact with foster carers. Regular discussions and visits to the carers' homes mean that the agency has good arrangements for routine communication regarding children's experiences and progress. The agency undertakes unannounced visits and ensures that children and their bedrooms are seen.

Foster carers set firm boundaries to manage children's behaviour. Carers do not use physical intervention. The agency encourages foster carers to reward children and to acknowledge and celebrate achievement. Risk assessments and safer-care plans help to ensure that the adults involved in a child's life understand known risks and are appropriately prepared to respond to potential concerns.

The required background checks are undertaken for initial assessments. The initial assessment reports provide a clear overview of each applicant's motivation to foster. However, the initial assessment reports relating to recommendations for more than one child to be fostered were sampled, and do not go far enough to demonstrate the rationale for recommending the terms of approval. This does not ensure enough analysis of each applicant's capacity to parent more than one child.

The agency is beginning to implement a system for reviewing carers' ongoing suitability. Carers undertake the required support and development standards. However, the agency does not ensure that every carer has a personal development plan. This omission means that the agency does not demonstrate how carers are supported to undertake ongoing training that is appropriate to their individual experience and the needs of the child or children in their care.

The panel is developing the systems and approaches that are to be used when it carries out its duties. The panel is helped by an experienced panel chair and some training from the agency. The panel chair has good knowledge and understanding of the function of the panel and, along with the vice-chair, shows a good level of professional curiosity. The agency has implemented an effective system that enables the panel to provide feedback, which helps to improve the quality of reports and assessments. Gender and ethnicity across the panel are well balanced and the

addition of care-experienced representatives is positive. However, there is not a member to represent experience in education. This limits the breadth of insight and advice that can be provided by the panel in this specific area.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is the founder and owner. The responsible individual, who is also the agency decision-maker, and the manager are building and evolving this service. They have help from a small team of staff and the panel members, who provide constructive feedback.

Since the service registered, the manager has been involved in the direct delivery of support to foster carers. He has had contact with every foster carer and child placed. This ensures that he maintains effective oversight of children's experiences and their progress. When issues emerge in placements, the manager ensures a swift response from the agency. For example, when carers face new challenges, the manager provides additional resources and support immediately. This helps to ensure that children's needs are met and that they make progress.

Working relationships with other agencies are good. Caseloads are small. The developing team of supervising social workers has previous experience of working in foster care. Consequently, the team provides good support, advice and guidance for the foster carers.

The agency uses an effective electronic system that enables foster carers and supervising social workers to record information about children. However, some cases sampled show that the recording of information is inconsistent and not helpful to children should they wish to access their files now or in the future.

The registered manager delivers training. He is determined to ensure that good, relevant training opportunities are embedded across the agency. Supervising social workers access training with the carers. Foster carers and staff have ample opportunity to develop their knowledge and professional understanding of foster care. This ensures that foster carers and supervising social workers remain competent in performing their roles.

The supervising social workers have regular discussions with the manager about the children's progress and the foster carers' needs. The supervising social workers receive good supervision. The effectiveness of the support and supervision that they deliver to the carers is monitored closely by the manager, which results in a dynamic approach to quality assurance.

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: 1243868

Registered provider: Fostering UK Limited

Registered provider address: Maple House, High Street, Potters Bar EN6 5BS

Responsible individual: Mirja-Liisa Mancini

Registered manager: Ian Johnson

Telephone number: 0333 044 6848

Email address: ian@fosteringuk.org.uk

Inspector

Rosie Davie: 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 children looked after, 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