

People Who Foster

Unit 8, Innovation Studios, Canal Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4DT
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

People Who Foster is a family run independent fostering agency based in Medway, Kent, serving the South East, Midlands and the North West. The agency registered with Ofsted on 4 October 2017 and provides a range of placements. These include short term, including bridging and pre-adoption, emergency, long term, respite, unaccompanied minors, parent and child, and children with disabilities. There are currently 23 approved foster carers and 37 children placed with the agency.

Inspection dates: 11 to 14 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:

- Leaders and managers are committed to providing a child-focused service that helps children grow in confidence and develop new skills.
- Leaders and managers have developed a professional service with a good reputation.
- Leaders and managers have a clear vision and are continually striving to improve the service.
- Supervising social workers are highly valued. They have good relationships with the children and have remained consistent in their lives.
- Supervising social workers go above and beyond their role to ensure that children's placements are stable and that their experiences are positive.
- Foster carers are very skilled and experienced and provide stable homes for children in their care.
- Foster carers feel very supported by the agency and value being part of a small, family orientated service.
- Children are well matched with foster carers. They are happy and continue to make progress.
- Children are kept safe and supported through difficult periods.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The agency has not yet established a formal process for gathering the views of children.
- The agency has not fully met all its targets in relation to the training of foster carers.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in long-term stable homes with experienced foster carers. Children have strong attachments with their foster carers and feel a real sense of belonging. Their day-to-day experiences are positive. Children are supported to develop their confidence and learn life skills. As a result, they are happy and continue to make progress.

The experienced team of supervising social workers is highly valued and is an integral part of the children's and foster carers' lives. In many cases, the supervising social worker has remained one of the most consistent people involved with the family. Feedback obtained during the inspection describes the supervising social workers as going above and beyond their role to support placements.

Most children were placed with their foster carers prior to transferring to this agency. However, the matching of children has still been seen as a high priority and, on the occasions where this has taken place, it has been well thought out. Records show that carers have the skills and experience to meet children's individual needs and that they are fully involved in the decision-making process.

Children benefited from a range of events that are organised by the agency. All the agency staff value children's participation and are continually trying new ways to engage with them. While these activities have been well received, formal consultation is not yet embedded into practice. However, this has been recognised by the agency and plans are already in place to develop this further.

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

Experienced foster carers draw on their years of experience and knowledge to provide safe care for children. They are very alert to children's vulnerabilities and report any significant events appropriately. They also work closely with the agency staff and the wider network to keep children safe and meet their needs. This includes providing emotional and practical support as well as devising strategies to prevent any concerning situations reoccurring.

The agency is very good at monitoring the stability of children's placements. Any cause for concern is identified immediately and action is taken to support the placement. Supervising social workers use their understanding of risk management effectively. Assessments are kept under review and are updated when necessary.

Foster carers have a positive approach to behaviour management. They know the children in their care extremely well and use praise and encouragement consistently well. They are also very good at using their experience and strong relationships with children to defuse and de-escalate challenging situations. As a result, children are helped to develop and learn new ways to manage their emotions.

Foster carers, children and external professionals speak positively about the agency and as a result, no formal complaints have been received. However, at the time of the inspection, there was no formal system in place to record any expression of

dissatisfaction about the service. This is a missed opportunity to keep track of low-level issues, capture what action has been taken and ensure that a satisfactory resolution is reached.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Strong managers have created a well-respected agency that is committed to helping children progress. A large number of experienced foster carers have transferred from other agencies to become part of this small, family orientated service. The rigorous recruitment process used by the agency reflects its strong values and ethos. Foster carers who were spoken to during the inspection said that the high-quality support they receive is one of the reasons that they continue to be foster parents.

The recruitment of foster carers has been extremely successful over the past year. This has resulted in the agency growing more rapidly than anticipated. While this has been positive, managers acknowledge that this has impacted on some areas of progression of the overall development plan. This has largely been in relation to strategic goals and not frontline practice. For example, all staff, foster carers and panel members are skilled and experienced and feel equipped to undertake their roles; however, wider training targets have not been fully met. The accessibility of online training courses is valued and has ensured that core subjects have been completed, but feedback from those spoken to during the inspection say that they would like more face-to-face training.

Geographically, the agency now also covers a wider area than first planned. However, strong management arrangements in each of these areas have helped to facilitate a smooth transition. Using technology to great effect, the agency staff say that they feel like one big team. They know all the foster carers and children, and all contribute to providing out-of-hours support and advice to them.

Leaders and managers have clear plans in place to continue to develop the service. They have a good understanding of their strengths which they use to good effect. They are also focused on goals and targets that address the areas that they feel are not being fully met. The clear monitoring arrangements support this process and help leaders to keep track of targets.

Good arrangements are in place for the ongoing selection, recruitment and retention of staff. Supervision records evidence that meetings take place regularly. Feedback from staff is very positive. They describe having lots of opportunities to reflect on practice. However, records do not always capture the quality of these conversations. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate the good practice that takes place.

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: 1259617

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Inspector

Amanda Harvey, social care inspector



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