

Family Fostering

Family Fostering Limited

G9 Marlowe Innovation Centre, Marlowe Way, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 6FA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency was registered in August 2014. It is privately owned and is based in Ramsgate, Kent. At the time of inspection, the agency had 13 foster carers, with 19 children in placement. The agency provides emergency, respite, short-term and long-term placements.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since August 2014.

Inspection dates: 25 February to 1 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 **outstanding**

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

Date of last inspection: 14 March 2016

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 and young people receive individualised care of a high standard that helps them to fulfil their potential.
- The agency has strong working relationships with other professionals within the team-around-the-child network.
- The agency organises a calendar of social events for all foster families. Children and young people really appreciate them and describe them as great fun.
- Foster carers support each other and talked about the agency as a 'great big family'.
- Children and young people receive effective support to maintain their good health and to develop healthy lifestyles.
- The agency makes sure that children and young people benefit from opportunities to engage in education and to attain good grades.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The registered provider did not follow the internal procedure for consulting with the designated officer about a concern about a child.
- One case file did not contain an up-to-date care plan from the placing authority, and the foster carers had not seen it. Monitoring systems had not identified this.
- Some young people experienced disruption in their lives because their foster carers decided to end their placements suddenly.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Children and young people should not move to another placement, unless this is by agreement following a statutory review, it is clearly in the child or young person's best interests, the decision has taken into account the child or young person's wishes and feelings, and the move is properly planned. The exception is when remaining in the placement is clearly impractical, or significantly compromises the welfare of others in the household. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services, page 14, paragraph 3.5)

- The fostering service works effectively in partnership with other agencies concerned with child protection, e.g. the responsible authority, schools, hospitals, general practitioners, etc., and does not work in isolation from them. (Fostering services: National Minimum Standards page 14, paragraph 4.7)
Specifically, the registered person should liaise with the responsible authority as to whether safeguarding concerns require further investigation.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The agency has a positive impact on the lives of children and young people. This is evidenced by the strong, and in some cases excellent, progress that children make across many areas of their lives. Children receive individualised care of a high standard that helps them to fulfil their potential. An example of this is the way in which foster carers supported twins to develop their identities and different personalities.

Foster carers form close and trusting relationships with children. These relationships underpin the good progress that children make. In particular, children make excellent progress in developing their communication skills, self-esteem and ability to relate to others.

The agency makes sure that children benefit from opportunities to engage in education and that they attain good grades. Foster carers enhance children's learning by engaging with them in creative play, arts, crafts and online opportunities, and by helping them to develop their love for reading.

Children receive effective support to maintain their good health and to develop healthy lifestyles. Children with medical conditions receive the specialist health support that they need. Foster carers work closely with health professionals to help children to manage these conditions. One child's health improved so much that he was able to be discharged from eight different specialist clinics.

The agency is committed to providing stability in children's lives. By working together with other professionals, careful matching, sensitive introductions and comprehensive ongoing support, staff contribute to the enduring nature of placements. Recently, one foster carer suddenly decided to stop fostering and another ended a placement after an incident. However, when endings were unplanned, the agency took effective action to minimise the negative impact on the lives of children.

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

The ways in which the agency promotes the emotional well-being of children is an area of excellence. Staff follow best practice in therapeutic fostering to support foster carers to relate to children with empathy, patience, acceptance and deep understanding of their life stories.

Behaviour management practices are effective in promoting children's increasingly constructive behaviours. Foster carers understand how children's past traumatic experiences might affect their behaviour, feelings and attitudes. Foster carers are skilled in helping children to recognise their feelings and to develop emotional

literacy and better self-regulation.

The culture of transparency and the involvement of children and young people contribute to good safeguarding practices. Risk assessment practices are effective at enabling children to develop safer behaviours. Each child receives their own risk assessment, and, where appropriate, management plan that has been specially designed for them, to help them to understand the risks and what they can do to make themselves safer.

Supervising social workers visit foster families on a regular basis to provide them with support, advice and constructive challenge. Foster carers said that they feel valued and supported. They talked highly about the agency and their relationships with their supervising social workers. The consistency of the leaders, managers and staff has resulted in strong professional connections.

Foster carers know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns. The agency quickly responds to these concerns and takes appropriate action to ensure that children are kept safe. On one occasion, the registered manager contacted the local authority social worker about a concern and ensured that the child received the appropriate level of medical assessment but did not consult independently with the designated officer. The internal safeguarding policy includes clear guidance regarding reporting arrangements but is not specific enough about who to contact in which circumstances. This was rectified during the inspection.

The quality of case records is high. Records are clear and detailed and provide accurate information. Records demonstrate that the agency's practices are compliant with regulations and good fostering practices. The agency routinely checks files to ensure that documents such as these are in place, but on one occasion the absence of a local authority care plan for a child in a long-term foster placement was missed. The foster carers were clear about the plan for the child but had not received the most up-to-date document. This was addressed immediately and had no impact on the child's day-to-day care and experiences.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager and responsible individual are extremely knowledgeable and experienced. They have developed an inclusive culture that the team respond positively to. The strong focus on putting children first is evident in all areas of the service. This is based on their high expectations, vision and values.

The fostering panel is a strength of the service. Panel members bring a range of skills and experience, enabling them to make sound recommendations. The process is robust and supports the overall aim of ensuring that only suitable applicants are recruited. The panel chair has worked closely with managers to develop the process and to ensure compliance with regulations.

Children receive all-round support that addresses their needs holistically. The agency has strong working relationships with other professionals within the team-around-

the-child network. These external professionals talked highly about the agency. The great majority of them said that this was the best fostering agency that they work with.

The managers are continually looking at ways to develop the service. They welcome and invite feedback from a range of sources and are quick to implement any good practice suggestions. Recent developments that exceed good practice include young people's active participation and involvement.

The agency has a learning culture and a genuine interest in developing children, young people and adults. Staff and foster carers' annual appraisals and personal development plans link with the agency's excellent training offer. There is a clear plan to enhance the fostering provision by developing further its therapeutic nature.

Staff are supported very well in their roles and have full confidence in the agency's leadership and management. They have frequent supervision meetings with their line managers, as well as with the psychotherapist who works closely with the agency.

Managers work hard to role model good practice and are very 'hands on' when it comes to direct work with foster carers and children. Foster carers value this. They spoke highly of the managers and said that this is the reason they continue to be foster carers, particularly when they experience difficulties.

The managers have excellent oversight of all areas of the service. They use a range of systems to ensure that the quality of care meets their expectations. Annual reviews of the approval of foster carers and regular supervising social workers' visits that include those that are unannounced and those that focus on health and safety contribute to the agency's rigorous quality assurance processes.

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: SC477723

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Inspector

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