

# Park Foster Care

Park Foster Care Ltd

APV House, Speedwell Road, Parkhouse Industrial Estate, Newcastle ST5 7RG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Park Foster Care was registered in 2004 and operates as an independent fostering agency. It is part of the CareTech Group. The agency is based in Newcastle-under-Lyme near Stoke-on-Trent and provides placements to local authorities across the North West, West and East Midlands.

The agency provides emergency, respite, short-term, medium-term and long-term placements for children and young people. The registered manager is an experienced social worker and has been managing the agency since 2016. At the time of this inspection, there were 70 children and young people in placement. Out of the 70 children, 51 are brothers and sisters. There are 49 fostering households with 85 approved individual carers.

Park Foster Care uses 'Park's parenting approach' as a model of fostering which promotes staff and foster carers' understanding of development trauma and how to care for children who have had adverse life experiences.

**Inspection dates:** 29 April to 3 May 2019

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of last inspection:** 7 March 2016

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

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

Assessments of foster carers are very detailed and analytical. The preparation and training of prospective foster carers are thorough and enable them to have an insightful understanding of the complexities surrounding the fostering task.

Foster carers feel that the agency's managers, staff team and clinician provide them with practical as well as theory and research-based solutions, which enable them to develop resilient relationships with children and young people.

'Park's Parenting Approach' and the use of therapeutic play inform assessments, training, support, supervision, staff and foster carer practice, agency-led activities and direct work with children and young people. This ensures that staff and foster carers have an enhanced understanding of the needs of children and young people looked after, and have the skills and confidence to parent them.

Foster carers and staff are professional and knowledgeable. Foster carers undertake training alongside staff and panel members, which ensures that all practice is underpinned by the same research and theory.

Foster carers and staff attend support groups and attachment groups facilitated by the agency's clinician. These sessions provide practical and emotional support to foster carers and real insight into children's experiences and responses. As a result, children develop a sense of safety and security in stable homes.

Children and young people are well matched to their foster carers. Matching is detailed and very well considered. As a result, placement stability is extremely strong with unplanned endings remaining consistently low. Another key strength of this agency is the support that staff give to foster carers who skilfully enable brothers and sisters to remain living with each other or nearby.

Children and young people settle into their new foster home due to the dedication and understanding of foster carers and the support they receive from staff, managers and other professionals. As a result, children and young people develop a sense of belonging.

Children and young people flourish. They develop a strong sense of identity and experience a wide range of positive personal achievements. Foster carers and the agency's staff quickly identify any developmental delays or behavioural concerns, and age-appropriate routines and play are introduced to support children's and young people's development.

Foster carers build exceptionally positive, nurturing relationships with children and

young people. Children and young people are integral members of their foster families. Foster carers are strong advocates and set high aspirations. They work closely in partnership with other professionals, such as teachers, social workers and therapists. As a result, children and young people experience significant achievements, and make exceptional progress from their starting points.

Children and young people maintain family links and sustain relationships that are important to them. Foster carers and the clinician help the child and their families understand their past, and to experience positive futures. They promote the birth family and proactively facilitate contact, while always listening to the experiences of the child.

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

The agency ensures that the safety and well-being of children and young people are paramount. This is embedded in foster carers' assessment, approval, training, supervisions and regular support groups.

Foster carers provide secure environments with clear boundaries from which children and young people can explore and grow. They are supported to take age-appropriate risks that consider their individual circumstances and understanding.

Foster carers and children are well supported when going through crisis. Staff and the clinician increase support, interventions and supervision when children and young people are unsettled. This additional support means that very few placements disrupt.

Foster carers and staff handle child protection concerns carefully and promptly. The responsible individual and registered manager liaise closely with all relevant professionals and share information appropriately. When there is a shortfall in practice by a foster carer, it is quickly and thoroughly investigated. Appropriate actions are taken to ensure that the safety of the child is given priority.

Staff and foster carers are swift to respond if a child or young person goes missing. They work successfully in partnership with other agencies to find the child or young person and ensure that they are safely returned. They then work together to ensure that the voice of the child or young person is heard, and plans are put in place to reduce the likelihood of them going missing again. This increases placement stability.

Staff and foster carers help children and young people learn the skills they require to be safe, that are appropriate to their age. Foster carers have a good understanding of the developmental stages of children and young people and promote activities such as learning to ride a bike or swim, walking to school with friends or travelling on the school bus.

The agency provides a range of training to staff and carers to further their understanding of attachment and how children's previous life experiences affect their behaviour. All now have access to online training on understanding

radicalisation. This will enhance initial training but, as yet, not all staff and foster carers have undertaken this course. Work is also ongoing to secure new behaviour management training with a physical intervention element. This will only be available to those foster carers who care for children and young people with specific identified needs.

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

The management team and social workers are ambitious and innovative in their practice. They are motivated to keep learning and developing to improve support to foster carers and the lives of the children and young people they care for.

All staff in the agency practise from a strong theoretical background, which continues to be enhanced by research and current practice developments. For example, during the assessment of prospective foster carers, consideration is now given to the impact of their adult attachment styles and whether they are conducive to parenting foster children.

Park's therapeutic parenting was developed by the agency's therapeutic lead as part of a Masters from Kings College London. It forms the basis of all practice throughout the agency for staff and foster carers.

The benefits to this attachment-based parenting model have been the subject of a five-year longitudinal study within the agency, which shows statistically significant evidence to illustrate an increase in carer confidence and positive changes to targeted behaviour for children and young people.

Managers, staff and foster carers are open and honest communicators and are amenable to outside support. They work as part of a team to consistently and effectively reflect on practice to ensure that children and young people are safe and their well-being is promoted.

Managers have excellent systems to quality assure and monitor the agency's performance. This ensures that they target the resources where they are needed most to improve children's and young people's well-being.

Staff turnover is exceptionally low. This is a strength of the agency and results in a high level of consistency for foster carers and children. Children and young people develop positive relationships with supervising social workers, who advocate well on their behalf.

The agency provides strong challenge to partner organisations to ensure that improvements continue to be made to the quality of care and in strengthening positive outcomes for children and young people. Supervising social workers are swift to challenge local authority social workers when they are not providing adequate support to the children and young people they place with the agency.

The fostering panel is challenging and highly effective. It provides a strong quality assurance function. The agency decision-maker makes reasoned decisions, with

clear qualifying determinations.

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

### **Recommendations**

- Support and training is made available to foster carers to assist them in meeting specific needs of the children they are caring for or expected to care for. This specifically relates to behaviour management training including physical intervention and understanding radicalisation training. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 20.8, page 41)

### **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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:** SC055725

**Registered provider:** Park Foster Care Ltd

**Registered provider address:** 5th Floor Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane,  
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**Responsible individual:** Beverley Senior

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## **Inspector**

Dawn Bennett, social care inspector



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