

# Sandwell Children's Trust Fostering

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, PO Box 2374, Oldbury B69 3DE

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency was registered on 7 March 2018. The agency was formerly part of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. Since April 2018, it has been part of Sandwell Children's Trust.

The agency offers mainstream, short- and long-term, emergency and connected persons placements.

**Inspection date:** 12 June 2019

**Date of previous inspection:** 25 February 2019

## This monitoring visit

Three compliance notices were raised at the last inspection. These notices related to safeguarding, leadership and management and the timely approval of connected persons. This inspection focused on the progress made to address the shortfalls outlined in these notices.

This visit found that two compliance notices had been met.

Children's safety and well-being are now being better promoted. The safeguarding policy and procedures have been improved. Staff have better knowledge in relation to safeguarding practice. Safeguarding concerns are being referred in a timely manner. Foster carers are receiving regular support and supervision when allegations are made and are being informed of outcomes. Delays to historical post-allegation reviews have been addressed or are scheduled to take place.

Leaders and managers have an improved understanding of the service and what is required to drive up standards moving forward. The staffing structure has been reviewed and an action plan is in place, with timescales for recruiting sufficient suitably qualified, competent, experienced and permanent staff. Managers now have a clear overview of the gaps in the training needs of foster carers. All appropriate staff have been trained in fostering assessments. The timely supervision of staff and

foster carers has improved. Staff appraisals have been completed or are scheduled to be completed.

One compliance notice has not been met. Some children are living with connected persons who have not been assessed and approved within timescales. Consequently, some children are living in unregulated placements. However, there is improved focus and rigour in identifying and monitoring unregulated placements with connected persons. Practice to supervise and support children and carers in unregulated placements has improved and there was no evidence that children were in unsafe situations. However, the number of children in unregulated placements has increased. At the last inspection, 12 children were living in 10 unregulated placements. There are now 13 children living in 11 households.

The other requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection were not fully scrutinised during this monitoring visit and will be assessed at the next full inspection.

## 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>A fostering service provider must, in deciding whether to approve X as a foster parent and as to the terms of any approval, take into account the recommendation of the fostering panel. (Regulation 27 (3))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the timely approval of connected foster carers.</p>	10/06/2019
<p>Ensure that the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a)) *</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the assessment, approval, training and support of connected persons are timely and robust, follow due process and are compliant with all relevant regulations, including The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 requirements. Ensure that written exemptions are in place when required, to ensure that all children's needs can still be safely met.</p>	22/11/2019
<p>The responsible authority may extend the temporary approval of a connected person if it is likely to expire before the full assessment process is completed, or the connected person, having undergone the full assessment process, is not approved and seeks a review of the decision in accordance with regulations made under paragraph 12F(1)(b) of Schedule 2 to the 1989 Act (1).</p> <p>In a case falling within paragraph (1)(a), the responsible authority may extend the temporary approval once for a further period of up to eight weeks.</p> <p>In a case falling within paragraph (1)(b), the responsible authority may extend the temporary approval until the outcome of the review is known.</p> <p>Before deciding whether to extend the temporary approval in the circumstances set out in paragraph (1), the responsible authority must first consider whether placement with the</p>	10/06/2019

<p>connected person is still the most appropriate placement available, seek the views of the fostering panel established by the fostering service provider in accordance with the 2002 regulations and inform the IRO.</p> <p>A decision to extend temporary approval must be approved by a nominated officer.</p> <p>If the period of temporary approval and of any extension to that period expires and the connected person has not been approved as a local authority foster parent in accordance with the 2002 regulations, the responsible authority must terminate the placement after first making other arrangements for the child/ren's accommodation. (Regulation 25 Expiry of temporary approval. The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010)</p>	
<p>Provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that foster carers undertake all necessary training in a timely way.</p>	10/06/2019
<p>The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation. (Regulation 28 (1)(2))</p> <p>A review must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider considers it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year.</p>	10/06/2019
<p>A person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20 (3))</p>	10/06/2019
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, having regard to the size of the fostering service, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs of the children placed by it, and the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 19 (3)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the recruitment of a permanent, stable management and staff team which can support staff and foster carers to meet the needs of children effectively.</p>	10/06/2019
<p>The registered person must give notice in writing to the Chief</p>	10/06/2019

Inspector without delay where the registered provider is an organisation and there is to be any change in the identity of the responsible individual. (Regulation 39 (1)(e)(iii))	
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))	10/06/2019
No business may be conducted by a fostering panel unless at least the following meet as the panel: either the person appointed to chair the panel or one of the vice chairs. (Regulation 24 (1)(i))	10/06/2019
The fostering service must maintain a register (a 'register of foster parents') and enter in it the following particulars in relation to each foster parent: the name, address, date of birth and sex of each foster parent and, in the case of a local authority fostering service, of each person with whom it has placed a child under Regulation 24 or Regulation 25A of the Care Planning Regulations, the date of approval and of each review of approval (as the case may be), and the current terms of approval (if any). (Regulation 31 (a)(b)(c))	10/06/2019
The registered person must maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35 (1))	10/06/2019
Where a person applies to become a foster parent and the fostering service provider decides to assess X's suitability to become a foster parent, any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation. (Regulation 26 (1))	10/06/2019
Ensure that assessments are of good quality to enable panel to make informed recommendations.	

\*This requirement is subject to a compliance notice.

## Recommendations

- Ensure that financial and other support is provided to all foster carers according to objective criteria that do not discriminate against foster carers that have a pre-existing relationship with the child. Family and friends foster carers may require some services to be delivered in a different way, but there should be equity of provision and entitlement. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 30.10, page 59)
- Ensure that the fostering service only suggests foster carers to the local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified, the fostering service should work with the responsible authority

to ensure the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 15.1, page 32)

- Ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of the fostering household, or staff member, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, and a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file. A copy is provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded. The information is retained on the confidential file, even after someone leaves the organisation, until the person reaches normal retirement age, or for ten years if this is longer. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 22.7, page 45)
- Ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. This specifically relates to safer caring plans. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 4.5, page 14)
- Ensure that the fostering panel and decision-maker make timely, quality and appropriate recommendations/decisions in line with the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 14, page 30)
- Ensure that each person on the central list has access to appropriate training and skills development and is kept abreast of relevant changes to legislation and guidance. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 23.11, page 48)
- Ensure that the fostering service appoints either one or two vice chairs, being members of the fostering panel, who can act as chair if the regular chair is unable to chair a meeting or the office is vacant. (Children Act 1989: fostering services Vol 4 2011, 5.12, page 41)
- Ensure that each panel member's performance, including that of the chair, should be reviewed annually against agreed performance objectives. (Children Act 1989: fostering services Vol 4 2011, 5.15, page 41)

## Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **Independent fostering agency details**

**Unique reference number:** 1267324

**Registered provider:** Sandwell Children's Trust

**Registered provider address:** Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, PO Box 2374, Oldbury B69 3DE

**Responsible individual:** Sara Scholey

## **Inspectors**

Dawn Bennett: social care inspector

Christy Wannop: social care inspector

Lisa O'Donovan: social care inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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