

Slough Children's Services Trust

Ground Floor West, St Martin's Place, 51 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire
SL1 3UF

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Slough Children's Service Trust is an independent, not-for-profit company that provides social care and support services to children, young people and families. The fostering service is situated within the trust and offers placements to Slough children. The agency is registered as an independent fostering agency. The agency currently supports 45 fostering households that are providing care for 52 children and young people.

Inspection date: 11 June 2019

Date of previous inspection: 8 April 2019

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit follows the last full inspection on 8 April 2019 at which the service was judged inadequate. Seven requirements were made. Four of these were issued as compliance notices, in respect of regulation 8, regulation 11, regulation 12 and regulation 20 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

It was not possible to monitor the specific steps detailed in each compliance notice. These notices have been reissued. Inspectors focused on the immediate actions of leaders and managers in response to the four requirements detailed above. These covered a number of practice areas which related to the management of the agency; safeguarding children; safer recruitment practice and ascertaining children's views.

The management arrangements for the agency have recently changed in response to the needs of the service. There are appropriate interim arrangements in place to cover the current temporary absence of the responsible individual. A new manager has been appointed and has made an application to register with Ofsted. A comprehensive review of systems has been undertaken by the interim responsible individual. Together with the new service manager, there is a clear commitment to continue to focus on improving practice and to provide visible leadership to staff.

There has been a focus on the improvement of staff's safeguarding practice. New risk management plans were sampled. Children's needs and their specific identified risks are understood well by staff. There were mostly effective strategies in place to minimise these risks, with one example of a lack of clarity of how an identified risk was being managed. The interim responsible individual and new service manager continue to focus on developing staff skills in assessing risk.

The newly devised safeguarding policy and procedure provides clear guidance for staff on how to respond when there are concerns about a child's welfare. The guidance for responding to allegations about foster carers is also clear about the procedural steps for staff to take. Two allegations have been made since the full inspection. In both cases, appropriate safeguarding action was taken. The agency has worked effectively with the designated officer. Following the investigations by statutory agencies, appropriate internal investigations are currently being undertaken.

Recruitment and vetting procedures for new staff joining the agency meet safer recruitment practice guidance. The agency has undertaken an audit of the recruitment records held for current employees and highlighted this as an area for improvement. The human resources department within the trust has seconded a member of staff to address this shortfall. This work is ongoing, with progress in this area not having been recorded. However, there is a clear plan in place to ensure the completion of this.

Children's wishes and feelings are being better captured through the recording tools used by supervising social workers for foster carers' announced and unannounced visits. There are good examples of direct work with children during these visits, with a supportive response demonstrated by the supervising social workers. The agency's new referral process includes a focus on gaining the child's view in relation to being matched with a foster carer. Due to the management team's focus on improving safeguarding practice with the team, the decision to place new referrals on hold was appropriately made. The impact of the new matching process will be clear once it has been put into practice.

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>*Registered person—general requirements</p> <p>The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to— the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency, carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation (8)(1)(a)(b))</p>	29/07/2019
<p>*Independent fostering agencies—duty to secure welfare</p> <p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times, and before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child’s— wishes and feelings (having regard to the child’s age and understanding), and religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. (Regulation (11)(a)(b)(i)(ii))</p>	29/07/2019
<p>*Arrangements for the protection of children</p> <p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for— written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or</p>	29/07/2019

<p>neglect, and of the action taken in response, consideration to be given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children placed with foster parents following an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation (12)(1)(a)(b)(3)(d)(e))</p>	
<p>Staffing of fostering service</p> <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 need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation (19)(b))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>Support, training and information for foster parents</p> <p>The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that foster parents are familiar with, and act in accordance with the policies established in accordance with regulations 12(1) and 13(1) and (3).</p> <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child’s care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation (17)(1)(2)(3))</p>	01/07/2019
<p>*Fitness of workers</p> <p>The fostering service provider must not— employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person— is of integrity and good character, has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform,</p>	29/07/2019

<p>is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform, and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation (20)(1)(a)(3)(a)(b)(c))</p>	
<p>Employment of staff</p> <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them— receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation(21)(4)(a))</p>	<p>01/07/2019</p>

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

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: 1183495

Registered provider: Slough Children's Services Trust Limited (09487106)

Registered provider address: Ground Floor West, St Martin's Place, 51 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire SL1 3UF

Responsible individual: Jackie Pape

Inspectors:

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector

Amanda Harvey, social care inspector

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