

Foster Care Associates South Western

Foster Care Associates Limited
Suite 2, Forresters House, 41 Estover Close, PLYMOUTH PL6 7PL
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency operates in the south of the region from its Plymouth office, and there is also an office in Bodmin. It operates in the north of the region from an office in Gloucester. The Plymouth office serves as its central headquarters.

At the time of the inspection there were 166 fostering households which had 190 children and young people placed with them.

Inspection dates: 29 July to 2 August 2019

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

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

Date of last inspection: 17 October 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children and young people enjoy living with their fostering families, and in most cases they are extremely settled. Many of the placements have continued for several years. As a result, children and young people have developed good attachments and a sense of security and permanence. Staff work hard to support foster carers and prevent placements from ending. However, when this does happen, planning takes place and respite carers are used to reduce placement disruption.

The children and young people achieve good outcomes while living with their foster carers. They receive safe, nurturing care, attend school regularly and enjoy holidays and clubs that enhance their experiences and development. Achievements are widely celebrated, and there is plenty of evidence of impressive outcomes. For example, young people who stay living with their foster carers past their 18th birthday go to university, attend college and form positive, enduring relationships. Both foster carers and social workers spoke proudly of the achievements the children and young people make.

Foster carers receive good support from their supervising social workers. Foster carers spoke warmly of this support. They said they felt as though they were part of a 'big family', and they are 'one big team'.

Visits to the foster carers' homes, supervisions and reviews take place regularly and, in the main, records reflect the good work the foster carers are doing. However, it was noted that some risk assessments are out of date, do not reflect detailed risks, are not always signed by the author and require better scrutiny to ensure that they reflect the needs of children and young people accurately, especially following incidents.

The views of foster carers, children and young people are captured. However, the agency is aware that greater efforts should be made to promote consultation and include these views in the continued development of the agency.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Children and young people living with foster carers are kept safe because the supervising social workers and the foster carers understand the children's and young people's safeguarding needs. The social workers and foster carers take the necessary action to ensure that children and young people are safe in the home and out in the community. However, the quality of risk assessment is variable and, in some cases, there is a lack of clear strategies, generic statements are used, and management oversight fails to demonstrate enough rigour to better keep carers, children and young people safe.

Since the last inspection, some children and young people have been reported

missing from their foster homes. Staff and foster carers have a good understanding of the reasons why they go missing. Nevertheless, return home interviews and scrutiny of these incidents remain weak. One example involved a lack of curiosity by a foster carer when a young person went missing, no clear protocol for the foster carer to follow and no clear strategies in place to reduce the times the young person was going missing. It was unclear how the foster carers could better educate the young person about sexual relationships and risk.

The agency has a well-organised staff and foster carer recruitment and assessment process. Disclosure and barring service checks are completed at an enhanced level, including for visitors to foster carers' homes.

Foster carers are helped to support children and young people through the use of behaviour plans and consultation with a team of therapists. However, some behaviour plans lack informed strategies and management oversight. For example, a plan for a young person who had autism spectrum disorder lacked specific details to support this young person's needs and challenges.

Foster carers receive a good level of training, which is available both face to face and via an online training package. Some foster carers have, however, failed to keep up to date with mandatory training. Nonetheless, foster carers spoken with demonstrated a sound knowledge in supporting children and young people. This has led to children and young people keeping themselves safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Since the last inspection, the agency has undergone a challenging period. Several long-standing senior managers, staff and foster carers left causing instability and uncertainty. In the absence of a registered manager, members of the senior management team have managed and led the agency. The interim management team ensured that these changes did not impact negatively on the remaining foster carers and children and young people.

The interim management team has a wealth of experience and demonstrates passion and dedication to the development of the agency. Already, there has been a considerable improvement in the management of the agency. For example, systems to review, record and monitor the quality of care have already been modified, and this has led to better collection of data. Nevertheless, leaders and managers recognise that further work is necessary to embed these systems, which in turn will reduce and prevent recording errors and improve the overall monitoring of the agency.

Foster carers and staff are supported well and have confidence in the interim management team. Records of supervisions are up to date, but the quality of recording is variable and therefore hampers leaders' and managers' opportunities to learn from practice.

Overall, the agency is meeting its aims and objectives. However, further work is

required to ensure that the voice of the child, consultation and participation of users of the agency help to inform the development of the agency.

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>Review of quality of care</p> <p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(1)(3))</p>	<p>25/10/2019</p>

Recommendations

- Children understand how their views have been taken into account and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 8, paragraph 1.2)
- The manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 50, paragraph 25.2)
- Entries in records, decisions and reasons for them, are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 52, paragraph 26.5)
- Information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third-party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 52, paragraph 26.6)

- The wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 9, paragraph 1.7)

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: SC038012

Registered provider: Foster Care Associates Limited

Registered provider address: Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, BROMSGROVE, Worcestershire B60 4AD

Responsible individual: Roy Murray

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 0117 923 8383

Email address: tracey.veale@thefca.co.uk

Inspectors

Linda Bond, social care inspector

Tina Maddison, social care inspector

Heather Chaplin, social care inspector



The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2019