

F5 Foster Care Limited

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First Floor Amington House, 95 Amington Road, Birmingham B25 8EP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

F5 Foster Care Limited is a private limited company based in Birmingham. The agency provides a range of placements, including long-term, short-term and respite placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency was providing placements for three children. It had three fostering households.

The registered manager has been registered with Ofsted since 13 August 2018. The registered manager is currently working towards gaining a level 5 diploma in leadership and management.

Inspection dates: 29 July to 2 August 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	inadequate
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	inadequate
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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There are serious and widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and the care and experiences of children and young people are poor and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

The agency was registered with Ofsted in August 2018. Foster carers are newly approved. Consequently, children have only been with their new foster carers for a short period of time. As a result, the long-term impact of the agency on children's experiences and outcomes is not yet tested.

Children have not been safely placed with foster carers. For example, managers made the decision to place two children with foster carers outside of the foster carer's approval numbers. It took two weeks before the right approval was secured.

Children are placed with foster carers before essential information is shared. For example, managers have failed to follow their own processes for assessing risks when children are required to share a bedroom. This is despite managers knowing that one child may pose a risk to another child if they were to share the same bedroom.

Oversight of children's health needs is poor. Key information about children's health needs and medical appointments is missing from the agency's records. As a result, managers are unable to demonstrate that they are aware of children's health needs.

The children's guide lacks information about the agency's statement of purpose and complaints process. This leaves children without essential information about the agency.

Children do not have regular opportunities to share their views about the care they receive or how the agency could improve. This is a missed opportunity to enable children's views to inform service development.

Despite the significant shortfalls in the agency functions, there are some areas of early progress for children. As a result of the commitment of their foster carers, children are beginning to settle into their new households and develop positive relationships. This includes taking part in family events and holidays. Children are supported to attend school, even when this is at a distance from their foster home. These positive indicators support children's stability in the early stages of a new placement.

Foster carers feel supported by the agency, despite the limited staff available to them. This reflects the commitment of the registered manager, who offers a high level of day-to-day contact with foster carers.

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

Managers fail to ensure that children have personal safe care plans and risk assessments that reflect their individual needs and known risks. This significant omission leaves foster carers without essential information about how to safely care for the children who are living with them. It also leaves foster carers, their family members and children vulnerable to allegations.

Foster carers have been placed in unsafe situations due to the lack of guidance on how to support children when they see their family. This lack of guidance has placed one child and their foster carer at risk of injury. The foster carer was required to physically intervene to safeguard the child, despite not having received training about how to do so safely. Managers failed to ensure that the foster carer made a record of the incident in accordance with the agency's guidelines. Managers have also failed to offer the foster carer any support after the incident. The ineffective management of this situation fails to allow the foster carer or the agency to learn from the incident and prevent a recurrence.

Foster carers do not have the necessary skills and understanding to enable them to manage children's vulnerabilities. This is despite foster carers caring for children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, a history of drug misuse or drinking alcohol under age. Foster carers have not received any specialist training or support to help them understand how to safeguard these highly vulnerable children. This failure leaves newly approved foster carers totally unprepared to be able to identify patterns of concern and to put in place appropriate safeguards.

Safe recruitment practice is weak. For example, managers have not verified the reasons why a person who has previously worked with vulnerable adults or children left their past employment. This omission leaves children vulnerable to being in contact with people who may not be safe to work with them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The registered manager for the service is an experienced practitioner with a range of relevant experience in fostering. She is in the process of completing the level 5 diploma in leadership and management.

The registered manager is the only qualified social worker employed permanently by the service. The management functions of her role have been overlooked in her focus to try and support foster carers and children. This has significantly impacted on her management oversight of the service. A lack of audit systems, and an over-reliance on self-reporting, has prevented senior managers from identifying the significant omissions identified during this inspection.

The fostering panel is in the early stages of development. The panel chair is suitably experienced and panel membership demonstrates a diversity of knowledge and experience. The panel chair has creative ideas about how the panel can

develop, including regular quality assurance meetings and the involvement of children in the panel process.

The quality of reports submitted to the panel is not of a consistently good standard. A lack of robust quality assurance resulted in two reports requiring addendum materials to be submitted to enable the panel to reach an informed recommendation. In one instance, this has resulted in a delay of one month in a decision being reached regarding a foster carer's approval.

Foster carers do not benefit from regular supervision. As a result, newly approved foster carers do not receive enough supervision visits within a six-month period. This failure to provide adequate supervision has left the foster carers without essential support and oversight in the early stages of their fostering career.

Managers have failed to provide foster carers with the necessary training to enable them to meet the complex needs of the children who are placed with them. Foster carers have not received training to enable them to understand the basic elements of what it means to be a foster carer. Consequently, foster carers do not understand the importance of record-keeping or how to care for children who have suffered separation and early childhood trauma.

Managers have not ensured that members of staff receive regular supervision or training. The registered manager has not received supervision since February 2019. The organisation's training plan fails to reflect the specialist role of the supervising social worker. These omissions leave staff without the knowledge or support required to fulfil their roles.

A lack of management understanding of regulation has resulted in administrative errors in the service. For example, the foster carer's agreement does not contain details of the foster carer's approval. This omission means that foster carers are without clear information about their fostering approval.

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
The fostering service provider must produce a written guide to the fostering service ("the children's guide") which includes a summary of the statement of purpose and a summary of the procedure (the representations and complaints procedure) established (i) in the case of an independent fostering agency, under regulation 18(1). (Regulation 3(3)(a)(b))	04/10/2019
<p>The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and 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)(2)(b)(3))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that children are only placed with carers who have the necessary approval to provide the placement required.</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the agency operates clear and accessible recording systems which are updated in a timely manner.</p>	04/10/2019
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. (Regulation 11(1)(a))*	04/10/2019
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. (Regulation 17(1))*	04/10/2019
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). (Regulation 17(2))	04/10/2019
The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a	04/10/2019

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 numbers 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(1)(a)(b))*	
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, or allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so. For the purposes of paragraph (1), 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(1)(a)(b)(3))	04/10/2019
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, and are enabled from time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform. (Regulation 21(4)(a)(b))	04/10/2019
If a fostering service provider decide to approve X as a foster parent they must enter into a written agreement with X covering the matters specified in Schedule 5 (the "foster care agreement"). (Regulation 27 (5)(b))	04/10/2019

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The fostering service provider's decision-maker makes a considered decision that takes account of all the information available to them, including the recommendation of the fostering panel and, where applicable the independent review panel, within seven working days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of panel minutes. (Fostering Services; National Minimum Standards, page 31, paragraph 14.9)

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: 1277076

Registered provider: F5 Foster Care Limited

Registered provider address: First Floor Amington House, 95 Amington Road,
Birmingham B25 8EP

Responsible individual: Hamait Ali

Registered manager: Claire Shepherd

Telephone number: 0121 2710555

Email address: cathy@f5fostercare.co.uk

Inspector

Tracey Cogan Greig, social care inspector



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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>

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