

Fostering Ltd

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Fostering Ltd, Suite 8, New Hall Hey Business Centre, New Hall Hey Road,
Rawtenstall, Rossendale BB4 6HL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency provides long-term and short-term foster care, including emergency and parent and child placements, for children from birth to 17 years.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 28 fostering households caring for 52 children and young people.

There has not been a registered manager in post since 31 December 2018.

Inspection dates: 12 to 15 August 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded, and/or the care and experiences of children and young people are poor, and they are not making progress.

Date of last inspection: 16 August 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Children's welfare and safety are not consistently promoted because of some serious failures in the agency's safeguarding practice. Additionally, the manager's monitoring and oversight of the agency, including the auditing of agency records, have failed to identify and address unsafe practice. Consequently, the overall experience and progress of children are compromised.

Matching is carried out without proper consideration of all children's needs; for example, the agency not rigorously assessing the potential impact of the child on other foster children. This does not ensure that the suitability of a placement is fully explored before a child is placed, which on occasion has increased the risk of placement disruption.

The agency's monitoring of children's progress, for example school attendance and educational attainment, is weak. Although the agency can provide anecdotal evidence of children's achievements, children's records, including the daily recordings of foster carers, do not reflect this. Consequently, the manager is unable to demonstrate all children's progress and experiences, which is unhelpful to children should they wish to access their files in the future.

Similarly, the manager's auditing of children's and carers' records is underdeveloped. Some important documents are missing from children's files, such as care plans, review meeting minutes, personal education plans and school reports. The agency is not therefore ensuring that foster carers have the most up-to-date information to enable them to provide appropriate care for each child.

A strength of the agency is its success in enabling brothers and sisters to remain living together. At the time of the inspection, many of the fostering households were caring for sibling groups. Moreover, the foster carers help children to keep in touch with their families in a planned and safe way.

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

The agency does not adequately promote some children's welfare and safety.

Serious shortfalls were found in three parent and child placements. The agency does not have in place comprehensive agreements between the placing authority, parent or foster carer that clearly outline the expectations of each party. Consequently, these foster carers and parents were unclear of their roles and responsibilities when caring for and safeguarding babies.

In the case of parent and child foster placements, the agency does not ensure that all foster carers' homes are suitably equipped to keep babies safe. For example, one baby did not have a suitable cot, which compromised its well-being and safety. On

another occasion, a carer did not have a thermometer to monitor the temperature of the bath water. As a result, the baby was placed in an unsafe bath on two occasions. This does not demonstrate that the foster carers are supported by the agency to reflect on unsafe practice and learn from previous mistakes.

The agency does not ensure that parent and child foster carers, or supervising social workers, have sufficient understanding of the complexities of these placements. The manager's oversight of these placements is weak, so unsafe practice is not being adequately addressed.

The agency had not undertaken rigorous health and safety checks on all carers' homes and caravans. Additionally, safety checks were not being routinely carried out on foster carers' gas appliances.

The agency's risk assessments do not provide foster carers with clear and consistent guidance on how to keep children safe. Furthermore, children's risk assessments are not always updated when new concerns emerge, such as potential child sexual exploitation.

The recording and reporting of serious incidents are variable, thus making it difficult to establish a thorough understanding of the level of concerns or a chronology of the action taken by the agency to manage risk.

The agency does not check all staff's and carers' car documents to ensure that when they transport children in their cars, they are legal and safe to do so.

Some shortfalls in staff recruitment procedures, for example not exploring gaps in employment history or verifying all references, are compromising children's safety.

Foster carer approval assessments and review reports are weak. They do not provide enough information, scrutiny or analysis to ensure that the agency decisions are well informed and safe. Additionally, checks on foster carers, members of their household and their home are not always undertaken prior to the agency approving them. This also highlights weaknesses in the agency's quality assurance, panel and agency decision-making processes.

Inspectors found that the agency had not obtained medical consent for two children placed in their care. This could potentially delay these children from accessing the health services that they require.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

The agency has not had a registered manager in post for over seven months.

The registered manager resigned in December 2018. She has continued in her position as a company director, which involves some aspects of leadership of the agency.

The assistant manager took over the registered manager position in January 2019.

At the time of the inspection, her application to register with Ofsted was being processed. However, since the inspection she has withdrawn her application to register.

A recent review of the statement of purpose was not shared with Ofsted until requested at the inspection. Additionally, the agency's website does not include a copy of the statement of purpose. This does not ensure that Ofsted, foster carers and stakeholders are kept up to date on the changes made in the agency.

Not all agency panel members have had their performance appraised as required. The agency cannot be certain that each panel member remains suitable for their role and continues to develop in line with the agency's needs.

The agency's oversight of foster carers' training is weak. Accordingly, the agency cannot be sure that all carers have the knowledge, understanding and skills required to care for children appropriately and safely.

Despite foster carers' comments that they feel well supported and supervised by the agency. Foster carers' supervision records are often brief and of a poor quality. When practice issues are raised about a foster carer, the supervision records do not demonstrate sufficient support or challenge to ensure improvements in practice.

Managers have yet to undertake a comprehensive review of the quality of care provided by the agency. Although some systems for monitoring are in place, they lack rigour and consultation with carers, children and stakeholders. The agency has failed to provide Ofsted with any written report in respect of their monitoring of the agency.

Although the agency has grown in size since the last inspection, the quality of care and protection provided to children has not been sustained. Two requirements raised at the last inspection have been repeated.

The agency has not been led with sufficient care, competence and skill. The many shortfalls in safeguarding practice and breaches in regulations have gone unchecked by the current leadership team.

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 provide a copy of the statement of purpose to the Chief Inspector and place a copy on their website. (Regulation 3 (2))	20/09/2019
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, 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))	20/09/2019
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 (a)) *	20/09/2019
The fostering service provider must promote the educational achievement of children placed with foster parents. In particular, the fostering service provider must implement a procedure for monitoring the educational achievement, progress and school attendance of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 16 (1)(2)(a))	20/09/2019
The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation	20/09/2019

<p>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 them 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)(3))</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>	20/09/2019
<p>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.</p> <p>The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</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)(2)(3))</p>	20/09/2019

* These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- Checks are carried out in line with regulation 26 and prospective foster carers understand why identity checks, relationship status and health checks, personal references and enquiries are undertaken about them and why DBS checks are made on them and adult members of their household. (NMS 13.5)
- The fostering service only suggests foster carers to 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. (NMS 15.1)
- The fostering service can demonstrate, including from written records, that it

consistently follows good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in foster carer selection and staff and panel member recruitment. All personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained in, understand and operate these good practices. (NMS 19.2)

- Foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service. (NMS 20.4)
- 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. (NMS 25.2)
- 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. (NMS 26.6)

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: SC488290

Registered provider: Fostering Ltd

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Responsible individual: Najam Asghar

Registered manager: post vacant

Telephone number: 0161 359 5674

Inspectors

Marina Tully, social care inspector

Mandy Williams, social care inspector



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