

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 54 children and young people.

Inspection date: 1 August 2019

Date of previous inspection: 8 April 2019

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit follows the findings of the last full inspection on 8 April 2019 when the service was judged inadequate. There were seven requirements 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. The last monitoring visit on 6 June 2019 focused on the progress made in relation to the four requirements that were subject to the compliance notices.

This visit specifically focused on whether the agency has met the steps of each of the four compliance notices. The remaining three requirements were not fully explored or tested at this visit.

There have been significant changes to the management and leadership of the agency since the last full inspection. This includes the appointment of a new service manager with their application to become registered manager in progress. There are interim arrangements in place during the responsible individual's extended absence. The new arrangements have enabled the leadership and management team to address effectively the shortfalls identified within each of the respective notices.

Regulation (8)(1)(a)(b)

The agency's monitoring systems have been thoroughly reviewed since the last inspection. The new performance monitoring systems in place enable the manager to maintain effective oversight of the agency's quality of care. The regular monitoring now undertaken by the manager ensures that there is appropriate scrutiny of practice. The manager is now able to identify any gaps and ensure a timely response to any practice issues. Importantly, the new systems have been implemented in consultation with staff, with the support of senior leaders.

With the review of the service plan, the manager has ensured that there is a detailed review of the areas in need of development. The new plan provides clear targets for the manager to measure progress against. The manager continues to review progress against the relevant legislation to ensure compliance with the regulations.

There has been a separate and detailed review of the qualifications of the agency's management team. The senior leadership team has reflected upon the needs of the agency in the context of wider organisational changes. The new service manager post has been created to ensure that the registered manager role has appropriate agency-wide oversight. There is a change planned to the responsible individual role, to further support the monitoring by the registered manager. It is not possible to review the impact of this change at this time. However, through the review and changes to the agency's systems, the monitoring of practice has now improved.

This compliance notice has been met.

Regulation (11)(a)(b)(i)(ii)

The manager has developed new recording systems for assessing children's needs when they are referred to the agency. Through the development of these systems there is now a clear process for assessing identified risks. This ensures that an effective risk management plan is devised for each child referred to the agency. The manager has utilised the new systems to inform decision-making about new referrals. This has enabled them to evidence where the child's needs would not have been suitably met by the agency.

Through the effective referral process, each child's specific needs are very well understood. This has helped the manager to identify foster carers with the relevant skills and experience to support each child. Where there were learning needs, these have been identified for carers, and individual development plans have been put in place prior to the start of each placement.

With the review of referrals and placement planning, the manager has also considered the learning needs of the staff team. There has been specific training delivered to agency staff to help develop practice around assessing risk and devising care plans. The quality of risk management plans has improved, with clear strategies

in place for foster carers to follow. Staff had reviewed and updated risk assessments effectively to reflect new concerns. As a result, individual risks for children are now better understood and the identified risks are being appropriately addressed.

The manager has reviewed the agency's foster carer records. This has resulted in changes to how these are monitored. The records are now up to date and a new audit tool has been introduced, which is completed with agency staff. The audit tool is detailed and enables the manager to maintain effective oversight of placements. The manager utilises this information when making decisions about potential referrals. Importantly, this results in the right match for the needs of the child.

This compliance notice has been met.

Regulation (12)(1)(a)(b)(3)(d)(e)

The agency safeguarding policy and procedures have been reviewed by senior leaders to ensure that effective guidance is in place in relation to the response to allegations about staff or carers. This enabled the manager to respond effectively to the small number of allegations involving carers. Through the improved recording of actions taken, there is clear evidence of the robust response taken in each case. Detailed risk management plans were devised in response to any potential identified risks.

The manager has developed good links with the designated officer and has followed the guidance provided by the designated officer. Together, they undertook a joint review of historical allegations. There were no previous gaps in practice identified. However, the manager has since implemented a system of regular monitoring meetings with the designated officer, to maintain effective oversight. The agency's management of risk has improved through all of the work that has been undertaken.

This compliance notice has been met.

Regulation (20)(1)(a)(3)(a)(b)(c)

Working with the trust's human resources department, senior leaders have ensured that additional support has been provided, to enable a review of the agency's recruitment practice. The revised recruitment policy and procedures have resulted in improvements in practice. The audit of existing staff files has demonstrated effective scrutiny and oversight. The new recording systems ensure that there is effective monitoring of pre-employment checks for new staff. Safer recruitment practices are now in place.

This compliance notice has been met.

Although the additional three requirements were not the focus of this visit, the provider has informed Ofsted of the action taken so far, in meeting these. These measures are suitable, but the impact has not yet been tested through inspection.

Consequently, these three requirements are repeated and will be fully tested at the next 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>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>	01/10/2019
<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>	01/10/2019
<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>	01/10/2019

Recommendations

- Implement a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 4.5)
In particular, ensure that safer care plans and risk assessments are effective documents.

- Only suggest 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. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 15.1)

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

Registered manager: Post vacant

Responsible individual: Jackie Pape

Inspectors

Maria Loneragan, social care inspector

Amanda Harvey, social care inspector

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