

Active Care Solutions

Active Care Solutions Limited
Pure Offices, Broadwell Road, Oldbury, West Midlands B69 4BY
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Active Care Solutions is an independent fostering agency based in Sandwell. It is a majority-owned subsidiary of Core Assets Group Limited. The agency specialises in providing placements for children and young people of multiple faiths with foster carers who can meet their cultural and religious requirements. The agency currently places children and young people throughout the West Midlands and parts of the North West of England. It offers a full range of placements and undertakes recruitment, assessment, training and support of foster carers. At the time of the inspection, the agency supported 57 fostering households and 85 children and young people.

Inspection dates: 11 to 15 November 2019

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 31 May 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Foster carers, managers and staff have high aspirations and are extremely ambitious for children and young people. Children and young people make significant progress in their education, health, social presentation and emotional well-being. This is because of the excellent care that they receive from foster carers.

Carers provide exceptional support to help children and young people achieve in their education and ensure that children and young people receive additional tuition when this is required. Young people attain qualifications that enable them to go to university and college. This includes young people who initially could not speak English. Agency staff research and track data from the Department for Education in order to understand the average grades of the national population and how these compare to those of the children and young people in this service. They use these findings to provide tailored help to children and young people if this is needed.

Staff have developed an inclusive service in which all foster carers, children and young people are encouraged to share their views. These views are valued and help to shape the service. Children and young people are actively involved in choosing activities and ask questions of potential foster carers at panel. Managers continually review children and young people's participation and actively encourage this. Consequently, there has been a continual increase in children and young people's engagement from one year to the next.

Managers expertly match children and young people with carers who can meet their needs. In transracial placements, foster carers are exceptionally skilled at meeting children and young people's cultural needs. Welcome guides for children and young people are translated into nine different languages. The agency regularly uses interpreters in addition to a team of staff who speak ten different languages between them.

The agency specialises in providing faith-based placements and has foster carers that represent the diverse local community. Diversity is celebrated throughout the service. Consequently, children and young people's different cultural, ethnic and religious needs are met.

Children and young people develop very positive relationships with their carers. They are treated equally and are welcomed into the home as a family member. One young person told the inspectors that they do not feel like a looked after child because they are 'part of the family'. Overall, children and young people benefit hugely from stable homes, some remaining in their foster home under staying put arrangements after the age of 18. This allows them to build positive, lifelong relationships.

Foster carers actively help young people to develop independence skills, and young people attend a residential trip to hone these skills further. Consequently, they are

well prepared for adulthood.

Foster carers are highly skilled in helping children and young people with immigration-related matters. For example, foster carers support children and young people to secure their immigration status. This enables children and young people to feel reassured and settled.

Staff proactively engage in local community events and encourage children and young people to make a difference to others. For example, children and young people have raised money for a homeless charity, and staff carried out voluntary work for the same organisation, making a positive contribution to those in need.

Foster carers support children and young people to maintain or develop relationships with their birth families. Some children and young people have been reunited with family members because of positive work completed by their foster carers. Foster carers build good relationships with children and young people's birth families. Many foster carers also supervise meetings between children and young people and their families when this is required. As a result, children and young people feel more comfortable during these visits.

Foster carers feel extremely well supported by managers and staff. They have excellent training that prepares them to care for the children and young people whom they look after. Carers receive outstanding guidance from their supervising social workers and from the management team. Support groups are held regularly in different locations to encourage engagement, and a manager attends every group. Consequently, foster carers feel valued and, like the children and young people, part of a very special community.

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

Children and young people are very well protected and feel safe. Supervising social workers and foster carers expertly consider children and young people's needs and the risks that they face. Individualised risk assessment and safer care plans are excellent and are regularly reviewed. This helps foster carers to keep children and young people safe.

Foster carers receive a wide range of training that is relevant to the children and young people whom they care for. Staff continually share information about potential risks to children and young people. Consequently, everyone within the service is well informed. For example, staff share current news topics about county lines and human trafficking. Newsletters sent to foster carers, children and young people and discussions in support groups are equally informative.

Children and young people receive excellent group training on 'hot topics' and current risks that they could be exposed to. These include child exploitation, county lines, gangs and extremism. Sessions also focus on issues related to mental health. As a result, children and young people become more aware and learn how to keep themselves safe.

Staff have bespoke training on similar subjects. In addition, managers research serious case reviews and disseminate the lessons learned throughout the service. The registered manager has created an excellent shared understanding of safeguarding between foster carers, staff, children and young people. In this way, everyone works together and has the knowledge that they need to keep children and young people safe.

Overall, the number of incidents when children and young people go missing is low. When children and young people do go missing, foster carers and staff work closely with others to reduce risks and secure their safe return home.

Careful recruitment and regular monitoring of carers ensure that only safe and skilled adults care for children and young people. Foster carer assessments and yearly reviews are of high quality. Panel members and the agency decision maker provide a vigorous level of monitoring and safeguarding that keeps children and young people safe.

Staff deal with safeguarding concerns diligently and promptly. In each case, they take swift and appropriate action, which protects children and young people.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is committed to ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded and achieve the best possible outcomes. His enthusiasm and commitment are disseminated throughout the team and the foster carers. Consequently, children and young people receive tailored care and a consistent approach. Children and young people believe that they can achieve.

The registered manager's ability to promote equality and diversity is commendable and worthy of wider dissemination. He has completed research and identified the need for a more diverse range of family homes for children and young people to live in. The registered manager works with local organisations in the community to dispel myths and beliefs held in some communities about fostering. This has led to a significant increase in families from different ethnic, religious and cultural groups becoming foster carers. This has ensured that children and young people have access to a much broader diversity of placements.

Managers continually monitor the service through regular quality assurance processes. A clear service development plan ensures that the service is continually improving. A dedicated quality assurance manager keeps up to date with new guidance and national research that can be applied to practice. For example, when the government announced additional funding for asylum-seeking children and young people, the agency was aware that this would benefit a proportion of the children and young people within the agency and took appropriate action.

Staff receive regular, high-quality supervision. They are well supported and have the opportunity and time to reflect on their practice. Monthly audit days bring the team together to share information and review records. Very good recording and

monitoring systems ensure that managers have a detailed overview of children and young people's progress.

Foster carers receive guidance and supervision from highly skilled supervising social workers. Foster carers feel extremely well supported and listened to. They feel that staff always go 'the extra mile' to assist them. Each year, staff organise a 'foster carer appreciation day' to thank the foster carers for all that they do. Foster carers feel valued and motivated to provide the best possible care to children and young people.

The management team is very proactive within the service and is very accessible to staff and foster carers. This creates a supportive, caring and family environment. Managers and staff are creative in their use of technology. For example, they use video calling to attend some meetings if they cannot attend in person.

Managers and staff have positive relationships with other professionals. They actively engage with services that children and young people may need and attend any meetings that are arranged. Staff empower foster carers to communicate directly with local authority social workers when this is appropriate. All professionals whom the inspectors spoke to praised the foster carers and attributed the excellent progress that children and young people make to the care that they receive.

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: SC484141

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