

Fostering for You

Fostering for You Limited 07756790

Unit 2.06, The Light Bulb, 1 Filament Walk, Wandsworth, London SW18 4GQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The fostering agency aims to offer a range of placements. These include emergency, short-term, bridging, long-term, short breaks, care for children with additional needs and parent and child.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 32 carer households providing care for 46 children. A high percentage of children in placement are aged under 11 years.

Inspection dates: 3 to 7 February 2020

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 9 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: good

Children stated that they feel safe and valued by their foster carers. They build strong relationships and develop secure attachments and a sense of belonging through the individualised care provided by their foster carers. Many children achieve permanency.

Staff and foster carers are child-focused and know the needs of children in their care. Children described foster carers as being 'kind' and doing their best to ensure their happiness. A parent commented, 'The foster carer provides my son with a positive male role model, something he has never had.'

The model of service used in this agency includes both family support workers and a contracted therapist. This provides robust support to staff, children and foster carers, which sustains placements and encourages best practice. Children's individual needs are addressed well. Supervising social workers have manageable caseloads and know their families thoroughly. Foster carers are of a high calibre and are energetic and imaginative.

Children have opportunities to express their views to trusted adults. They can talk to agency staff and some have mentors or advocates. A child said, 'I would come straight to one of the managers should I have any concerns.' However, the children's guide lacks information on the agency's complaints procedures and how to access the children's commissioner.

Enthusiastic, experienced, proactive supervising social workers support the children and the foster carers. They advocate in a tenacious way so that children's often complex needs are met.

Ensuring children's participation is an exceptional strength of the agency. Children are encouraged to contribute their views and are involved in the development of the agency in a variety of ways. These include specific consultation groups, specialist workshops for children on understanding how to stay safe in the community, and discussions with the agency's development manager.

Children benefit from a wide range of activities and experiences that help them to develop their confidence and build happy memories. These include ice skating, police cadets, go-karting and holidays abroad, as well as activities arranged at the agency office.

Children enjoy good health, and many do well in education, through the proactive and effective support of their foster carers. However, the agency does not have an effective system in place to monitor the achievements and progress of children in education.

Children maintain relationships with friends and family through well-planned and supported contact. Older children described being able to take responsibility for making their own contact arrangements.

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

The agency has implemented a detailed matching document to ensure that stronger matching processes are followed. This means that placement stability for children is good. A local authority commissioner said, 'In my opinion, the agency's greatest strength is their communication, especially with us in the placements team. They have a high calibre of foster carers who are experienced, and the matching is thorough.'

Children are safeguarded by foster carers and staff who are generally alert to the individual child's potential risk factors and vulnerabilities. Foster carers and staff demonstrate a sound understanding of risk, and what is required to manage and minimise risk and how this should be done. However, this work is not well supported by the underpinning formal risk assessments. Neither the risk assessments nor the associated safer care plans explicitly identify the strategies to be used to support children to stay safe.

Foster carers and staff work together effectively to manage incidents of children going missing and risk-taking behaviours. Foster carers are persistent in maintaining contact with children during episodes when they go missing. Incidents of children going missing are reducing significantly.

Foster carers are generally supported to manage the behaviours of children through training and supervision. This includes the use of de-escalation strategies. During supervision, foster carers discuss their use of behaviour management strategies to encourage children to change their behaviour. However, these strategies are not included in children's plans and there is no formal system that enables managers to have oversight of such measures as required by regulation. This misses opportunities to identify successful strategies and potential difficulties in a placement; learning from both could maintain the stability of the placement.

The agency has a therapeutic consultant who provides additional support, guidance and strategies for foster carers to meet children's individual needs.

There is a knowledgeable and experienced panel chair who is well supported by the fostering panel adviser. The fostering panel members have access to a range of training. Quality and assurance processes for the fostering panel are good. The fostering panel and decision-maker operate effectively to ensure that only suitable people are approved as foster carers.

Agency staff make effective use of their established systems to ensure that foster homes maintain a safe and comfortable environment for children.

The agency's recruitment of staff and foster carers is thorough and meets safer recruitment requirements.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager has recently resigned from the agency. While a new manager is recruited the experienced and qualified service manager is providing appropriate management oversight to the agency to ensure stability and consistency for children, foster carers and the staff team.

Foster carers are overwhelmingly positive about the agency. They described the agency as 'lovely to deal with' and 'informative and responsive'. They reported receiving regular, high-quality support and communication from all agency staff, including senior leaders. An experienced foster carer described feeling respected and involved, saying, 'The agency do listen, from the bottom to the top.' Another foster carer said, 'Social workers have been superb. Always available and very supportive. They treat us with respect and professionalism.'

Staff supervision, appraisal, induction and training are good. Agency staff are qualified and experienced and receive regular and valuable supervision. The needs of children are central to all formal supervision and appraisal meetings. Foster carers and staff reported gaining a lot from supervision.

Staff speak very highly of their managers and are enthusiastic and thoughtful about their work with foster families.

Managers have devised systems that monitor and track the performance and delivery of the fostering service. For example, children's individual outcomes trackers are regularly reviewed. This review should ensure that foster carers and staff understand children's individual progress and identify any shortfalls in support that may have an impact on achieving better outcomes for children. However, individual progress is based on the individual view of the allocated staff member. There is no independent monitoring of individual children's progress and the views of the child are not obtained in the process.

The agency thinks creatively about opportunities for children. Agency staff come up with good ideas for the enrichment of children's lives and make this happen. Foster carers, staff and children feel very well engaged, respected and involved in the life of the agency.

Leaders ensure that the agency is operating within the ethos as outlined in its statement of purpose. However, this document is out of date and fails to provide full information to external stakeholders.

Managers understand the strengths and areas for improvement of the service. An aspirational but realistic development plan is in place.

Good-quality assurance systems permeate all aspects of the agency's work, which contributes to continuing improvement. However, consultation with children, foster carers and external professionals is not evidenced in monitoring reports.

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>The fostering service provider must—</p> <p>keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children's guide,</p> <p>notify the Chief Inspector of any such revisions within 28 days, and</p> <p>if the children's guide is revised, supply a copy to each foster parent approved by the fostering service provider, and to each child placed by them (subject to the child's age and understanding). (Regulation 4 (a)(b)(c))</p>	30/04/2020
<p>Ensure that the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that safer care plans, risk assessments and associated documents detail all known risks and vulnerabilities and are explicit about the strategies to be used to support children to keep safe.</p>	30/04/2020
<p>The fostering service provider must promote the educational achievement of children placed with foster parents.</p> <p>In particular, the fostering service provider must—</p> <p>implement a procedure for monitoring the educational achievement, progress and school attendance of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 16 (1)(2)(a))</p>	30/04/2020
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and</p> <p>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</p>	30/04/2020

purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.

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)(a)(b) (2)(3))

Recommendations

- The fostering service must ensure that children can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support, without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 1.6)

In particular, ensure that the complaints system is easily accessible to children.

- Being able to promote positive behaviour and manage children's behaviour well are central to the quality of care provided in any foster home. Negative behaviour should usually be managed through building positive relationships with children. Foster carers need to be able to respond positively to each child or young person's individual behaviour and to be skilled at both diffusing difficult situations and avoiding situations escalating. The child's placement plan must set out any specific behavioural issues that need to be addressed or approaches to be used. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, paragraph 3.96)
- The Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 16.4)
- 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 26.6)

In particular, ensure that records kept evidence the child's voice and contribute to an understanding of the child's life and the progress they have made.

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

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Inspector

Juanita Mayers, social care inspector



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