

Regional Foster Families - South Central

Regional Foster Families Limited
Unit W8A, Knoll Business Centre, Old Shoreham Road, Hove, BN3 7GS
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Regional Foster Placements Limited is a privately owned, independent fostering agency based in Brighton and Hove. It undertakes the recruitment, preparation, assessment, approval, supervision and training of foster carers. Foster carers provide a wide range of placements, including emergency, short-term, long-term and parent and child.

At the time of this inspection, there were 11 fostering households and 15 children and young people in placement.

Inspection dates: 27 to 31 January 2020

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

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

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: 5 December 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

Committed, caring and experienced foster carers provide nurturing and empathic care focused on children's individual needs. This helps children to begin to develop a positive sense of belonging within the foster family. Children benefit from attuned and individualised support, which helps them to develop skills appropriate to their age and respective stage of development. Foster carers were consistently described by professionals as going 'above and beyond' in their roles.

Children's needs are thoroughly understood by agency staff. Matching with foster carers is successful due to this. Through the consistent care provided, children make very good progress overall. Foster carers support children's learning to help them achieve good educational outcomes. Where children are not engaged in education, the carers, supported by the agency, advocate strongly on their behalf. Children's health needs are positively promoted through foster carers supporting them to access services.

Foster carers feel they are part of a 'family' within the agency, with one describing feeling 'blessed'. They are very well supported by all of the staff team and fellow carers. The agency's values are important to foster carers. Foster carers benefit from high-quality, reflective supervision, which supports them to undertake their roles to best meet children's individual needs. This is supported by comprehensive, ongoing training and learning opportunities, including joint training with staff. Foster carers describe the support provided by supervising social workers and the registered manager as 'over and above' what they expected.

Through training in therapeutic approaches, foster carers are helped to strengthen their understanding of the impact of trauma on children. This knowledge is effectively applied to the relationship-based care provided to children and parents. One child described their carers as 'amazing' and this reflected the sensitive approach to responding to the child's needs and past experiences. One parent being supported in a parent and child placement described knowing they can 'rely' on their carer, who has been both consistently supportive and a positive role model.

Children and their parents, where placed together, receive a bespoke welcome pack provided by the agency. This is an excellent example of the nurturing start to placements, which is representative of the agency's child-centred and empathic approach. Within this are specifically tailored guides which inform children and parents of their rights in clear and age-appropriate language. Children's individual cultural and religious needs are well understood. This accessible rights-based approach is strengthened through the support of interpreters where appropriate.

Consultation with children, including birth children within foster families, is purposeful and effective. Supervising social workers spend time to understand what each child is communicating, including through their behaviour, then address what is

communicated. Foster carers actively take part in consultations and provide ideas for service development. These are acted on and change, where appropriate, happens in response to consultation by the agency with children and foster carers.

Recruitment of foster carers focuses on identifying carers who fit well within the ethos and standards of the agency and this strong value base informs agency decision-making. The panel is very effective in its quality assurance role. Panel members are supported by a very experienced and inclusive panel chair. Training for panel is a particular strength, with examples of this directly impacting on the panel's effectiveness. Panel members are child-centred in their discussions, which reflects the ethos of the agency. The agency decision maker has effective oversight and ensures appropriate scrutiny of panel recommendations.

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

Children's individual vulnerabilities are well understood, with effective risk management plans in place that include strategies to minimise the risks identified. Where there are risks related to children being missing, including risk of child sexual exploitation, there is a tenacious response by the staff team. This is supported by the effective use of practice tools that are used to identify patterns and areas of concern. The staff team is persistent in ensuring that there is an effective response, by all partner agencies, when a child returns from an episode of going missing.

Supervising social workers have a detailed understanding of safeguarding risks outside the family environment. This is supported through a specialist ambassador role within the agency which focuses on the sharing of up-to-date knowledge in relation to child exploitation. In practice, this strengthens the safeguarding culture through the learning shared with children, carers, panel members and the staff team. The supervising social worker undertaking this role has also shared this learning more widely in other regions.

Safer recruitment practice is followed in respect of employees. Children contribute to the recruitment of staff and their views have suitable weighting in decision-making. These approaches help to ensure that only adults suitable to support children are recruited. This is embedded in practice as a result of both the registered manager and the responsible individual promoting the quality of care as a core value and the ethos of the agency.

Supervising social workers provide in-depth reflective supervisions to carers. These focus on the quality of care provided to children together with ensuring that effective safeguards are in place to meet the child's needs. Where there have been allegations made in respect of carers, there have been thorough and balanced investigations undertaken by the registered manager. While small in number, the quality of the investigations has been noteworthy, resulting in detailed action plans. This has included excellent collaborative working with the designated officer. The agency consistently works in partnership with all statutory agencies to safeguard children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager is passionate, tenacious and child-focused. They lead a committed, caring and hard-working team through role modelling the ethos of the agency. The high regard for the registered manager results in a staff team that is inspired to focus on the best outcomes for children. Together, the staff team members regularly surpass expectations of their respective roles. The responsible individual fully supports the values of the agency and enables the team to put them into practice. Their effective leadership helps to ensure that quality of care is central to this.

The registered manager is aware of the agency's many strengths both in terms of the team's practice and the service offered to children and carers. The development of bespoke groups to support children to gain an understanding of issues affecting them is an example of this. Children are supported to further develop their resilience through these groups. Consultation with carers is focused and the registered manager ensures that carers' views directly inform service development.

Children's strengths are recognised, with the registered manager supporting bespoke ways to celebrate them dependent on the individual child's talents. This positively impacts on a child's sense of self. Children's rights are promoted well, including supporting them to access independent advocacy. The registered manager personally supports children to explore their interests and one positive example of this being where they supported a child to meet an interior designer in London.

Supervision of staff is reflective and child-focused. The registered manager provides clarity of expectations and an appropriate focus on safeguarding. This is further strengthened by the supervision provided to them by the organisation's safeguarding manager. This is supported by the effective monitoring and oversight of the quality of care by the registered manager using systematic audit tools.

There is a detailed plan for the changes in management of the agency. The responsible individual and registered manager have a measured transition plan. This includes identifying the support to be provided to the new prospective manager. Due to their current employment within the agency, consistency of approach is possible. This provides stability for both the staff and the carers, who have been informed of this change.

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: 1183032

Registered provider: Regional Foster Families Limited

Registered provider address: Old Auster, The Causeway, Mark, Highbridge,
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Responsible individual: Joann Catterall

Registered manager: Elizabeth Barnes

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Inspector

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector



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