

Fusion Fostering South West

Fusion Fostering Limited

Fusion Fostering, Richmond House, Taunton TA3 6BY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The South West office of Fusion Fostering undertakes the recruitment, assessment, approval and training of foster carers who care for children aged 0–18 years in the South West region. The agency also operates offices in other regions of England.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 66 fostering households, who were caring for 78 children and young people.

Since the previous inspection, a new manager has been appointed. The manager has not yet been registered by Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 March 2020

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 6 February 2017

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 and young people enjoy living with their fostering families and, in most cases, they are extremely settled. As a result, these children and young people have developed good attachments and a sense of security and permanence. Typically, unplanned endings to placements are few, but, when they do occur, children and young people are supported well during the move.

Children and young people who have lived with their fostering families for several years achieve good outcomes. They receive safe nurturing care, attend school and college regularly, and enjoy holidays and clubs that enhance their experiences and development. Some young people also contribute to the training of foster carers.

Foster carers understand the need for children and young people to feel safe and secure. Foster carers spoke warmly and with love about the children and young people they care for.

Foster carers receive regular good-quality support from their supervising social workers. They spoke positively of this support. One foster carer said their supervising social worker was 'amazing', and 'went above and beyond'. Supervising social workers regularly meet with children and young people; they have good relationships with birth children as well as those children who are fostered.

Visits to the foster carers' homes, supervisions and reviews take place regularly and, in the main, records reflect the good work the foster carers are doing. However, it was noted that some safer care plans lacked detail and were often generic in their content. Leaders and managers recognise that improvements are necessary to ensure that they reflect the needs of children and young people accurately, especially following incidents.

Assessments of new foster carers, home visits and reports to panel are completed well, in good time and by the same supervising social worker. An organised quality-assurance process helps to ensure that assessments are well-written and identifies any issues at an early stage, so that they can be resolved. Throughout this process, new foster carers, their children and families are fully involved. This means that foster carers are better able to form relationships with their supervising social workers. If difficulties arise and cannot be resolved, another supervising social worker is allocated. In most cases, good matching takes place and all of the necessary information is available, enabling staff to make informed decisions.

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

Children and young people living with foster carers are kept safe because the supervising social workers and the foster carers understand the children's and young people's safeguarding needs. The social workers and foster carers take the necessary action to ensure that children and young people are safe in the home and out in the community.

Since the previous inspection, the agency has changed its operational model, and previously independent care partners are now employed by the agency. Recruitment records for these staff were sampled, and showed that safer recruitment procedures are followed. However, it remains that leaders and managers are continuing to address some minor areas of the recruitment process to ensure that all employees are rigorously vetted.

Some children and young people go missing from their foster homes. Independent return home interviews do not always take place. However, staff and foster carers provide opportunities for the children and young people to talk with someone they are familiar with on their return, and records are kept detailing these conversations.

Local authority professionals spoke positively of the agency. They said that they are kept up to date and have concerns shared with them. For the most part, serious incidents reported to Ofsted are done so in a timely manner. However, the manager failed to report to Ofsted a substantiated allegation and did not carry out an effective risk assessment, in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Issues regarding standards of care have been addressed with foster carers, but follow-up recommendations have not always been clearly set out or followed through. Leaders and managers are reviewing the procedure to ensure the effectiveness of this process.

The agency is in the process of rebuilding its website. Due consideration has been given to how this platform further safeguards children and young people from inappropriate adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The new manager is in the process of registration with Ofsted. Due to the recent change in the operational model, it has been a challenging period for the agency. Leaders and managers recognise that further work and time are necessary in order to embed the new model. However, all staff continue to work well together and are aspirational for the children and young people.

Leaders and managers have maintained good standards of practice built around a culture of continuous improvement. This is achieved by providing regular supervision, and training from professionals that are skilled and knowledgeable in their field.

Management monitoring and reviewing take place and all the agency's work is quality assured to achieve consistency. However, despite this, inspectors identified shortfalls in management oversight. Leaders and managers recognise that reporting tools and mechanisms need to improve in order to ensure a consistent approach to the monitoring and effectiveness in the operation of the service.

Leaders and managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the agency. A comprehensive development plan contains several actions that are yet to be started, and some that remain in their infancy and therefore are not yet measurable.

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>Notifiable events</p> <p>If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36(1))</p>	15/05/2020
<p>Independent fostering agencies – duty to secure welfare</p> <p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure that safeguarding process are followed in relation to allegations; ■ ensure that the agency addresses any actions that are identified that relate to the standards of care. 	15/05/2020

Recommendations

- Ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes the financial viability of the service, any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the service and ensuring the quality of the service. (NMS 25.1)
- 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. In particular, ensure that safer care plans are of a consistent standard that give guidance to foster carers. (NMS 25.2)

- The executive side of the local authority or the independent foster service's provider/trustees, board members or management committee members: monitor the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children. (NMS 25.7(b))

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: 1226630

Registered provider: Fusion Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Old Mill, Maltravers House, Petters Way, Yeovil
BA20 1SH

Responsible individual: David Tucker

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 01823 491 010

Email address:

Inspectors

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector
Sarah Canto, Social Care Inspector

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