

Fostering Ltd

Suite 8, New Hall Hey Business Centre, New Hall Hey Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale
BB4 6HL

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency provides long-term and short-term foster care for children up to the age of 18 years.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 25 fostering households caring for 38 children.

Inspection date: 1 to 3 April 2020

Date of previous inspection: 12 August 2019

This monitoring visit

Due to Covid-19, the second full inspection was deferred.

The purpose of this off-site inspection was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

Inspection activity

- Reviewed the agency's quality of care report, December 2019.
- Reviewed children's, foster carers' and external professionals' responses to Ofsted's annual survey, March 2020.
- Reviewed the agency's monitoring documents.
- Reviewed the agency's electronic records, including children's, foster carers', staff's and panel members' files.
- Telephone discussions with the responsible individual.
- Telephone discussions with the proposed registered manager.
- Telephone discussions with the team manager.
- Telephone discussion with a newly recruited supervising social worker.
- Telephone discussion with the agency's administrator.
- Consultation with local authorities' children's commissioners.

The agency has made some significant improvements since the last full inspection. There are no serious or widespread failures that leave children at risk of harm. High-risk behaviours, such as going missing from home, substance misuse, offending and child exploitation are not a concern for this agency. The children are safe, and they feel safe.

Improved monitoring of the health and safety checks on all carers' homes and caravans is further enhancing children's welfare and safety.

However, the recording of safeguarding concerns continues to be an area for improvement. In particular, these records do not provide sufficient information to enable a thorough evaluation of the actions taken by the agency and other professionals. Additionally, child protection concerns have not always been reported appropriately; for example, the agency has reported some concerns by email only. This does not ensure that the information is promptly received and acted upon. The manager acknowledged this as an area for improvement.

The agency can now evidence some excellent education outcomes for children; for example, all children's school attendance is above 90%. Furthermore, children confirmed that their foster carers help them with their learning. Improved monitoring systems are ensuring that the leaders of the agency have clear oversight of the children's progress, experiences and outcomes.

Improvements in the monitoring of training are helping the managers to identify any gaps in the foster carers', staff's and panel members' learning. The training records confirmed that the agency has a strong focus on training. This was also reflected in a foster carer's comments, 'The things I like about the agency are, excellent training; good supervision; and approachable.' Similarly, the staff feel well supported and they enjoy a range of training opportunities.

Panel members are provided with ongoing training and most have had their performance appraised annually. However, the panel chair had not had an annual appraisal, despite this being identified as a shortfall at the last inspection. A recommendation has been raised to address this.

Communication with Ofsted has improved. The agency has provided Ofsted with updated copies of the statement of purpose, the children's guide and the quality of care report as required.

The revised children's guide is bright, child-centred and informative. Some minor amendments are needed to ensure that it meets the national minimum standards; in particular, Ofsted's and the children's commissioner's details and an explanation of how children can access independent advocacy.

The agency has revised its matching documentation to improve how they match foster carers with children. How this development works in practice has not yet been

tested because the agency has not received any new referrals. This recommendation will be assessed at the next full inspection.

Some important documents continue to be missing from a number of children's files, such as care plans, medical consent and delegated authority. The agency is still not ensuring that foster carers have all relevant information to assist them to undertake their roles. This requirement has therefore been repeated.

Some shortfalls in staff recruitment procedures continue, such as not exploring reasons for leaving previous employment and not assessing an applicant's physical and mental health. These shortfalls are undermining safe recruitment practice and potentially compromise children's safety. This recommendation has therefore been repeated.

Foster carers are not always recording information about children in a sensitive way that protects children's privacy and confidentiality. This recommendation has therefore been repeated.

The shortfalls identified at this inspection are largely in relation to poor recording practice and are thus highlighting weaknesses in the auditing of these records.

The agency does not have a registered manager. However, a suitably qualified and experienced manager has been appointed to this role and her application to register with Ofsted is progressing.

Undoubtedly, the leaders and the staff are committed to developing and improving the agency. They have made child-centred decisions to ensure that children's welfare and safety are priorities. All but one of the seven requirements identified at the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed, which demonstrates the agency's enthusiasm and capacity to improve.

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 must prepare and implement a written policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect, and of the action taken in response. (Regulation 12 (1)(b)(3)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that written records provide a clear and thorough audit trail of the actions taken by the foster carer, agency and other relevant professionals.</p>	08/05/2020
<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 them 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)(3))</p> <p>In particular, ensure to obtain and provide to the foster carer a copy of each child's care plan, medical consent and delegated authority from the placing authority.</p>	08/05/2020

Recommendations

- The fostering service only suggests 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. (NMS 15.1)

- The fostering service can demonstrate, including from written records, that it consistently follows good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in foster carer selection and staff and panel member recruitment. All personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained in, understand and operate these good practices. (NMS 19.2)
- All staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually. (NMS 24.6)
- The manager regularly audits 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. (NMS 25.2)
- 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. (NMS 26.6)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection 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: SC488290

Registered provider: Fostering Ltd

Registered provider address: Suite 8, New Hall Hey Business Centre, New Hall Hey Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale BB4 6HL

Responsible individual: Najam Asghar

Inspector

Marina Tully, social care inspector

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