

SC061808

Attachments Fostering Limited

Monitoring inspection

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this children's home

Attachments Fostering Ltd is an independent fostering agency, based in Snodland, Kent. Qualified, permanent staff are employed, and the agency also uses a regular bank of qualified independent social workers for additional assessment and review work. The agency has its own established fostering panel, chaired by an independent person.

At the last inspection on 11 March 2020, the agency had nine approved fostering households supporting 14 children situated across a small area in the Kent region. Services offered include emergency, short-term and bridging placements, long-term and parent and child placements.

Inspection date: 16 April 2020

This monitoring inspection

This inspection was conducted remotely by reviewing documentary evidence submitted by the registered manager in response to the steps specified in the compliance notice issued on 31 March 2020. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with the registered manager and two members of staff on 20 April 2020. These arrangements were in place to follow guidance issued by Public Health England, in response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

A full inspection of the agency was undertaken on 11 March 2020. The agency was judged to be inadequate, partly due to serious and widespread failures to ensure the safety and well-being of the children placed with agency foster carers. On 31 March 2020, a compliance notice was issued to the registered provider and the registered manager under Regulation 11(a) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. The compliance notice specified five steps to be completed by 13 April 2020 to ensure that the agency was meeting the requirements of Regulation 11(a).

Step 1 required the registered manager to demonstrate how pre-placement procedures would ensure that the welfare of the child and the management of risks would be addressed by the proposed foster carers. In the action plan submitted to

Ofsted, it states that a review of the current pre-placement planning and matching process, and a review of the matching policy and procedures, has been completed. However, the registered manager has not been able to explain what the findings of this review were. The strengths and weaknesses of these systems have not been identified.

The registered manager submitted a report headed 'Review of Processes for Monitoring Safer Care and Staff Competency' which states that the review concluded that systems and procedures at the agency were robust. However, the registered manager does not specify the reasoning that underpins this judgement. The report later states that 'there is still room for improvement especially in detailed assessments'. The registered manager has not been able to explain what the required improvements are and no documents identifying these have been submitted to Ofsted.

The actions taken by the registered manager to promote a high standard of pre-placement planning and matching do not have a sufficient degree of urgency. The action plan includes a proposal to review all foster carers' profiles and identify areas for their professional development. To date, the only step that has been taken to address this action is a monitoring checklist being introduced. The registered manager confirmed that the work on identifying foster carers' development needs has not commenced in any detail.

Step 1 also required the registered manager to submit a matrix identifying which staff have the skills and qualifications to complete pre-placement assessments. The registered manager did not include the one permanent social work-qualified member of staff in this matrix. Therefore, the matrix does not specify the areas of development this member of staff needs to focus on to be able to complete pre-placement assessments. This member of staff does not have a professional development plan and the member of staff's mentor was not able to specify her learning and professional development needs.

Step 2 of the compliance notice required the registered manager to show how gaps in foster carers' skills and experience would be recorded before a child was placed, and that plans were being made to demonstrate how these gaps were being addressed in a timely way. The evidence submitted by the registered manager does not show that plans for meeting foster carers' learning needs will consistently address any gaps in a reasonable timescale. In one case, a timescale of four months was given for foster carers to receive training on matters that were central to a child's well-being and personal development.

A senior member of staff spoken to as part of this inspection process had no knowledge of any arrangements that were in place to ensure that foster carers receive necessary training while the current social distancing measures are in place. The action plan submitted by the registered manager makes reference to online training being provided during the COVID-19 pandemic, but does not identify what online courses will be available or the timescale for completing these.

Step 3 of the compliance notice required the registered manager to undertake a review of the monitoring systems for children's safe care plans and individual risk assessments. The registered manager was asked to report on the effectiveness of these systems. The report submitted to Ofsted does not specify the findings of the registered manager's review, other than that the systems in place are robust. The registered manager was not able to describe what makes the systems robust or what strengths and weaknesses in the systems were identified.

The action plan submitted by the registered manager indicates that, in addressing this step, she has focused on reviewing each child's individual risk assessment and safe care plan rather than reviewing the effectiveness of the monitoring systems that should underpin the quality and timeliness of these assessments.

The action plan also states that the risk assessment policy and procedure have been reviewed. The registered manager stated that this review had resulted in changes being made to the policy. However, a comparison of the updated policy, dated 10 April 2020, with the risk assessment policy previously in place, indicates that no significant changes have been made as a result of the review.

Step 3 also required the registered manager to report on the competency of each member of staff to complete risk assessments and safe care plans. The registered manager did not report on the competency of the one permanent supervising social worker employed by the agency. The registered manager informed the inspector that this was because she knew this member of staff was not competent in these areas of practice. However, there are currently no written plans for how the deficiencies in this member of staff's knowledge and skills will be addressed. The action plan does state that staff will attend training and workshops in relation to risk management and safe care planning when social distancing measures are lifted, and that online training will be available in the meantime. The registered manager and staff spoken to during this inspection were not able to provide any information regarding this online training.

The action plan does give examples of how closer monitoring of risk assessments and safe care plans will be achieved in future. One of the measures is for each high-risk case to be monitored through the daily staff meeting. The registered manager was asked to submit evidence that these daily meetings are taking place and high-risk cases are being discussed, but no evidence of this was provided.

Step 4 of the compliance notice required the registered manager to produce risk assessments, safe care plans and any other relevant documents to demonstrate that foster carers were being given clear strategies to manage children's individual risks. The registered manager provided information relating to 13 children placed with agency foster carers. Of these, there were two children for whom no risk assessment was submitted and the risk assessment for a third child was incomplete. All the risk assessments that were submitted had been reviewed since the compliance notice was issued on 31 March 2020.

The risk assessments do not consistently provide clear strategies for foster carers to follow to mitigate against risk. For example, a risk assessment for a parent and child placement does not identify any potential risks resulting from the care the parent may provide. A risk assessment for a child at risk of child sexual exploitation provides few strategies for supporting the child to keep herself safe. Another risk assessment does not provide the foster carers with clear guidelines on what to do if unknown adults come to the foster home looking for the child, despite such an event occurring in recent weeks. In this risk assessment, the scoring to establish the level of risk the child may be exposed to has not been completed. None of the risk assessments have been signed by all the professionals listed as needing to be aware of the risk assessment.

The registered manager submitted 13 children's safe care plans. It was evident in only four of these plans that a review had taken place since the compliance notice was issued on 31 March 2020. The registered manager stated that she had briefly reviewed all the safe care plans, but time had not allowed her to 'go through them with a fine-tooth comb'.

The safe care plans are not consistently individualised to address the specific needs of each child. For example, some plans contain identical measures relating to behaviour management approaches. The plans often refer the foster carer to agency procedures, for example the missing procedure, rather than specifying the actions a foster carer should take in response to a particular child going missing. None of the safe care plans have been signed by all the professionals listed as needing to be aware of the plan.

In the registered manager's 'Review of Processes for Monitoring Safer Care and Staff Competency' report, it states in the conclusion that 'an individual strategic plan on how to support the foster carer in order to safeguard the children in placement will be made, monitored and evaluated'. The registered manager confirmed on 20 April 2020 that work on individual strategic plans has only recently commenced.

Step 5 of the compliance notice required the registered manager to provide details of how children's risk assessments and safe care plans would be kept under regular review and updated as necessary. The action plan and report submitted by the registered manager identifies a number of mechanisms by which these forms will be reviewed. These mostly consist of meetings, such as management meetings, team meetings, administration meetings, supervision meetings and daily meetings. Many of these meetings were not scheduled to take place between 31 March 2020 and 13 April 2020 when the steps in the compliance notice were due to be met.

The registered manager was asked if she could produce minutes from the daily meetings to demonstrate that the high-risk cases were being kept under review, as specified in the registered manager's report and action plan. The registered manager did not produce any evidence to show that daily reviews are taking place.

On 23 April 2020, Ofsted held a case review to consider whether an evaluation of the documentary evidence provided by the registered manager, and the subsequent

telephone conversations with the registered manager and two members of staff, demonstrated that the steps in the compliance notice had been met. It was concluded that none of the steps in the compliance notice had been met for the reasons outlined in this report.

Ofsted will now consider whether further enforcement action needs to be taken as a result of the compliance notice not being met.

The actions taken to meet all the requirements, set at the full inspection on 11 March 2020, were not reviewed as part of this monitoring inspection and are repeated below for reference.

What does the children's home 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, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the 'Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards'. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that foster parents are familiar with, and act in accordance with the policies established in accordance with regulations 12(1) and 13(1) and (3).</p> <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 him 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)(2)(3))</p>	30/04/2020
<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, and</p> <p>before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child's—</p> <p>wishes and feelings (having regard to the child's age and understanding), and religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. (Regulation 11(a)(b)(i)(ii))</p>	30/04/2020
<p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and</p> <p>sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12(1)(a)(b))</p>	30/04/2020

<p>The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 18(4))</p>	<p>30/04/2020</p>
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, having regard to—</p> <p>the size of the fostering service, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by it, and the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 19(a)(b))</p>	<p>30/04/2020</p>
<p>The fostering service provider must not—</p> <p>employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or</p> <p>allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—</p> <p>is of integrity and good character,</p> <p>has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform. (Regulation 20(1)(a)(b)(3)(a)(b)(c))</p>	<p>30/04/2020</p>
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them—</p> <p>receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, and are enabled from time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform. (Regulation 21(4)(a)(b))</p>	<p>30/04/2020</p>
<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 purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p>	<p>30/04/2020</p>

<p>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))</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>	<p>30/04/2020</p>
<p>The registered provider must carry on the fostering agency in such manner as is likely to ensure that it will be financially viable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in its statement of purpose.</p> <p>The registered provider must—</p> <p>ensure that adequate accounts are maintained and kept up to date in respect of the fostering agency, and</p> <p>supply a copy of the accounts, if requested to do so, to the Chief Inspector.</p> <p>The registered provider must provide the Chief Inspector with information requested for the purpose of considering the financial viability of the fostering agency, including—</p> <p>the annual accounts of the fostering agency, certified by an accountant,</p> <p>a reference from a bank expressing an opinion as to the registered provider's financial standing,</p> <p>information as to the financing and financial resources of the fostering agency. (Regulation 37(1)(2)(a)(b)(3)(a)(b)(c))</p>	<p>30/04/2020</p>
<p>Where the registered manager proposes to be absent from the fostering agency for a continuous period of 28 days or more, the registered person must give notice in writing to the Chief Inspector of the proposed absence.</p> <p>Except in the case of an emergency, the notice referred to in paragraph (1) must be given no later than one month before the proposed absence is to start, or within such shorter period as may be agreed with the Chief Inspector, and the notice must specify—</p> <p>the length or expected length of the proposed absence,</p> <p>the reason for the proposed absence,</p> <p>the arrangements which have been made for the running of the fostering agency during that absence,</p>	<p>30/04/2020</p>

<p>the name, address and qualifications of the person who will be responsible for the fostering agency during the absence, and</p> <p>the arrangements that have been made or are proposed to be made for appointing another person to manage the fostering agency during the absence, including the proposed date by which the appointment is to start.</p> <p>Where the registered manager has been absent from the fostering agency for a continuous period of 28 days or more, and the Chief Inspector has not been given notice of the absence, the registered person must without delay give notice in writing to the Chief Inspector specifying the matters mentioned in paragraph (2).</p> <p>The registered person must notify the Chief Inspector of the return to duty of the registered manager not later than 7 days after the date of return.</p> <p>(Regulation 38(1)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(4)(5))</p>	
<p>The registered person must give notice in writing to the Chief Inspector without delay if any of the following events takes place or is proposed to take place—</p> <p>where the registered provider is an organisation—</p> <p>the name or address of the organisation is changed,</p> <p>there is any change of director, manager, secretary or other similar officer of the organisation.</p> <p>(Regulation 39(1)(e)(i)(ii))</p>	30/04/2020
<p>The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to—</p> <p>the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and</p> <p>the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency,</p> <p>carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill.</p> <p>The registered provider must ensure that—</p> <p>where the registered provider is an individual, that person,</p> <p>where the registered provider is an organisation, the responsible individual,</p> <p>where the registered provider is a partnership, one of the partners,</p>	30/04/2020

undertakes, from time to time, such training as is appropriate to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary for carrying on the fostering agency.

The registered manager must undertake from time to time such training as is appropriate to ensure that they have the experience and skills necessary for managing the fostering agency. (Regulation 8(1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(3))

Information about this inspection

Ofsted is aware of the challenges that COVID-19 (coronavirus) is currently posing to those we regulate. During this inspection, the inspectors took into consideration the impact of any measures being taken to slow the spread of COVID-19 by the agency. This has included the effect these have had on staffing arrangements. The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the children's home since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC061808

Provision sub-type: n/a

Registered provider: Attachments Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 24 Downsview, Chatham, Kent ME5 0AP

Responsible individual: Osman Koca

Registered manager: Dorothy King

Inspector

Stephen Collett, social care inspector

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