

Credo Care

Credo Care, 12 High Street, Lydd, Romney Marsh, Kent TN29 9AJ
Monitoring visit
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency was founded in 2004 and is based in Lydd, Kent within the Southeast Region. There are sub-offices located in the Midlands and East Anglia. The agency specialises in caring for children with physical disabilities and those who have complex medical needs, learning difficulties and/or autism. The agency offers short-term, long-term, staying-put and specialised respite care placements.

At the time of this inspection, there were 59 children placed and 86 active fostering households, some of which offer respite care only.

The current manager was registered with Ofsted in July 2019.

Inspection date: 20 August 2020

Date of previous inspection: 29 April 2019

This monitoring visit

This announced monitoring visit follows a complaint received by Ofsted. This was in relation to the organisation's response to a complaint and concerns about the leadership culture within the agency. Foster carers, professional and staff responses to Ofsted's social care 2020 survey raised similar concerns. At the last full inspection, conducted on 3 May 2019, the service was judged good, and five requirements were made.

This virtual monitoring visit focused on how the registered persons have addressed requirements under regulations 11, 17, 20, and 35 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations (2011). In accordance with Ofsted guidance on COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions, this visit was undertaken remotely. Telephone discussions were held with the registered manager, responsible individual, supervising social workers, foster carers, children's social workers and the human resource (HR) officer. Email feedback was received from the panel chair. Various documents that were emailed to the inspectors were also considered.

Leaders and managers have met all the requirements that were set at the last inspection.

Since the last Ofsted inspection, there has been a restructure of the staffing arrangements as a result of some job losses and a move from office to home-based working. This, alongside the departure of key senior managers before the last inspection, has continued to cause ripples of insecurity for some staff and some foster carers.

There have been some challenges from staff and foster carers to changes that have been implemented by leaders. Senior managers have made efforts to address this. Yet, some undercurrents remain. This continues as an area of development for the leaders and the managers to manage. However, most of the staff and foster carers said that the changes in the way of working have been positive and that they feel supported.

Foster carers were particularly positive in their praise of the support that they receive from their supervising social workers. Manageable caseloads mean that the staff have time to offer a high level of support to foster carers.

Overall, the staff who were spoken to said that they feel well supported. Initiatives such as the weekly drop-in tea meeting with the registered individual have provided additional personal and professional support. This, in turn, has helped to empower the staff in their role to help and support the foster carers and the children.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection that the leaders and managers should ensure that any person not directly employed, such as independent social workers, should have planned supervision. Supervision records sampled showed that all staff, including the registered manager, are given opportunities to discuss personal and practice matters, and these discussions are reflective. The quality of supervision records sampled by the inspector during this visit was good.

The registered manager has provided the service with an updated written policy on responding to complaints. This could be strengthened by setting out the arrangements for dealing with complaints about the registered persons. Records are kept of complaints, which detail how they are dealt with, the outcome and any actions taken.

The referral and extended matching process mean thoughtful consideration is given to all children who require a foster home. The appointment of a new placement manager, alongside oversight of all new referrals by the registered manager, ensures additional scrutiny and planning. Feedback from a child's social worker described the process as efficient and child-centred.

A recent example of a child moving into a fostering family showed that there is a strong focus on ensuring that the move is right for the child and for the children already living there. Part of the planning for this child included the foster carer

putting pictures of the child alongside other family pictures. This has helped the child experience a sense of permanence and belonging in the foster carer's family life from the outset.

Risk assessments and risk management plans are well structured and individualised to the needs of the children. Plans reflect the children's current needs and provide a good narrative and guide to support adults to help the children become increasingly safe. There is evidence of regular reviews of assessments.

Foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that are appropriate to their learning needs and experience. Managers audit the compliance of carers with the training expectations as part of the annual review process. The expectation for carers to undertake training is high, and any gaps in training are addressed.

All staff and foster carers attend updated safeguarding training on a rolling programme. Due to the restrictions relating to COVID-19, the majority of training has been online during this period. Nevertheless, the take up of training is reported to be high with an increase in male carers accessing webinars and online training.

Foster carers who offer care to children with complex medical needs receive bespoke training before the children join their home. This is regularly updated by the relevant community nursing teams. This multi-disciplinary approach is supported and encouraged by the staff and leaders. This ensures that carers have the tools and specialist skills to ensure high-quality care and to help improve the children's life experiences.

The agency's review of all recruitment files has ensured that all staff are suitable and are safe to work with children. This is monitored through monthly auditing by the compliance administrator. The HR manager was able clearly to articulate safer recruitment processes and has recently completed a refresher in safer recruitment training.

The fostering panel provides a rigorous quality assurance function. A diverse range of members form the central panel list that supports the panel process. All active members are now appraised annually. This ensures appropriate scrutiny of their competency to perform this important role.

Panel members consider all new applications to foster and relevant foster carer reviews. They are supported by the registered individual who is also the agency decision-maker. His role has been separated from operational activity to ensure no conflict of interest.

There has been a review of the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6. The new template designed by the registered manager identifies clear actions to improve the quality of foster care provided by the agency. It is informed by consultation with foster carers, children living with foster carers, and their placing

authority. The registered manager and registered individual demonstrate a strong understanding of the service and of their responsibilities for safeguarding children. They show enthusiasm and ambition to deliver sustained progress and to continue to develop the service in the best interests of children.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit 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: SC035250

Registered provider: Credo Care Ltd

Registered provider address: 12 High Street, Lydd, Romney Marsh TN29 9AJ

Responsible individual: Roy Hipkiss

Responsible manager: Richard Powell

Inspectors

Anne-Marie Davies, social care inspector (lead inspector)

Vevene Muhammad, social care inspector

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