

Child Focus Fostering Agency

2–4 Balmoral Road, Leyton, London E10 5ND

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a private fostering agency. It has 15 fostering households and currently provides placements for 12 children.

Inspection date: 20 August 2020

Date of previous inspection: 8 April 2019

This monitoring visit

Ofsted conducted a monitoring visit of this independent fostering service on 20 August 2020. This was as a result of Ofsted receiving information that was cause for concern about a senior manager of the organisation. The provider runs a number of other registered provisions in addition to the fostering service.

The purpose of the visit was to review the involvement of this senior manager with the fostering service. The visit also reviewed the effectiveness of the fostering service's recruitment of staff, and the inspector reviewed the service's progress in addressing shortfalls identified at the last inspection.

This monitoring visit found that the senior staff member in question has had minimal influence on and involvement with the running of the fostering agency. This was confirmed by the director of the agency, the responsible individual and the registered manager, who were all interviewed during the visit. The inspector reviewed key fostering records and reports that the registered manager said were authored by her and not the senior manager. This was found to be the case.

Recent regulation 35 monitoring reports and safeguarding notifications were all written by the registered manager and forwarded by her directly to Ofsted. A comparison of reports held on site with the report that had been forwarded to Ofsted took place. This confirmed that none of the documents had been amended

prior to being sent to Ofsted. Fostering panel meeting minutes were found to be accurate and appropriately detailed.

This monitoring visit found gaps in the senior manager's vetting information. The senior manager's job application did not provide an explanation for gaps in her employment history. This discrepancy was not explored by staff during the senior manager's recruitment interview as expected.

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) risk assessment form for the senior manager was completed two years after her appointment and not at the point when criminal offences were first known to the organisation. This does not demonstrate that recruitment practices are safe and robust. The DBS risk assessment contained insufficient details and did not accurately assess potential risks posed to children, young people and others. Recruitment practices are not thorough. This does not confirm that staff are suitable to work for the fostering agency.

The checklist of the senior manager's induction process is partially completed. It is unclear whether this individual completed a full induction. This does not confirm that staff receive good support and training once they are appointed.

The review of four other personnel files highlighted gaps in vetting information. A personnel file contained only one of the two required written references. This file also failed to evidence that an interview had taken place and did not contain confirmation of the applicant's formal qualifications. DBS checks are not routinely updated every three years as safe recruitment guidelines recommend. Panel members do not receive annual appraisals. This does not confirm that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable children and young people.

This monitoring visit found that most of the identified shortfalls from the last inspection have been resolved. However, two shortfalls remain unresolved. Managers fail to provide feedback about the quality of assessments at the fostering panel and they do not consistently record the recruitment and suitability checks for foster carers.

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>Fitness of workers</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,</p> <p>and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20(3)(a)(b)(c))</p>	01/01/2021
<p>Employment of staff</p> <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them—</p> <p>receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, and</p> <p>are enabled from time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform. (Regulation 21(4)(a)(b))</p>	01/01/2021

Recommendations

- Panel/s provide a quality assurance feedback to the fostering service provider on the quality of reports being presented to panel. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 14.1)
- The fostering service has a record of the recruitment and suitability checks which have been carried out for foster carers and those working (including volunteers) for the fostering service which includes:

(c) checks to confirm qualifications which are a requirement and those that are considered by the fostering service to be relevant. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 19.3)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor staff recruitment 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: SC036628

Registered provider: Sherico Care Services Limited

Registered provider address: Sherico Care Homes Ltd, 2–4 Balmoral Road,
London E10 5ND

Responsible individual: Veleta Hayles

Responsible Manager: Miss Joanna Francis

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, social care inspector

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