

Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

185 Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8JY

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency currently has 25 fostering households and offers short-term, long-term, respite, emergency, and parent and child placements.

The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

Inspection date: 2 December 2020

Date of previous inspection: 29 October 2018

This monitoring visit

A monitoring visit took place on 29 September 2020 to examine an incident more closely and assure Ofsted of the safety and welfare of the children concerned and to establish whether the agency was acting in accordance with the regulations. At that visit, the inspectors identified a range of concerns and shortfalls in the agency's safeguarding practice. Because of this, seven requirements and two recommendations were made. The date set for meeting these requirements was 20 November 2020.

The focus of this announced visit was to monitor the progress made in meeting the requirements, as well as to follow up on some more recent safeguarding incidents and to obtain an update on the current leadership and management arrangements. Three regulatory inspectors conducted this visit remotely over two days. These arrangements were in place to follow guidance issued by Public Health England, in response to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

Since the previous monitoring visit, the registered manager and two supervising social workers are no longer in post. This in part has contributed to the requirements not being met. The action plan submitted to Ofsted in response to the previous monitoring visit was reviewed as part of this visit. The recent appointment of a new manager has been used effectively to begin to address these shortfalls and progress

the action plan. However, while some improvements have been made, these are not yet fully embedded into everyday practice.

The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to—

the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency; and

the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency;

carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b))

At the previous monitoring visit, the inspectors identified gaps in the quality and content of assessments of foster carers. The external consultant tasked with carrying out a review in this area also identified that further work needed to be done, particularly in relation to more robust reporting and analysis and strengthened reporting arrangements through supervision and quality assurance. Because of this, the responsible individual took the decision to put the recruitment of new foster carers on hold until these issues were addressed, along with scrutinising the files of foster cares who have transferred in to identify any gaps. At this visit, no evidence was seen in relation to these actions being progressed. However, the responsible individual has started the work in draft form. Inspectors were informed that the new manager will take on responsibility for the quality assurance role and task.

This requirement is not met.

The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (1)(a))

The responsible individual has fully acknowledged that the correct procedures were not followed in the management of the incident that led to the previous monitoring visit and fully accepts the findings. To understand the issues in more detail, an external review of the agency was commissioned to look at the concerns and identify any lessons learned. The report raised similar issues about the poor quality of records and a lack of willingness from the registered manager to address poor performance with the supervising social workers. New social workers have been appointed and are in the process of being introduced into the agency. During this visit, inspectors found that records of visits to foster carers still lack depth, analysis and insight from supervising social workers. In the interim, the new manager is in the process of reviewing the recording template to ensure that it is reflective and robust for them to use.

This requirement is not met.

The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which—

is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect; and

sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect.

(3) The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for—

the prompt referral to the area authority of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by the fostering service provider;

notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the fostering service provider, to the Chief Inspector;

consideration to be given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children placed with foster parents following an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b)(3)(4)(b)(c)(e))

The responsible individual acknowledges the shortfalls in practice in relation to identifying and reporting concerns. The written policies and procedures are clear but have not always been followed by the social work staff and managers. Action taken to improve practice going forward is for all staff to undertake training in this area as a matter of urgency. The new manager has taken responsibility for supervising all social work staff until expectations are clear and being routinely followed. The local authority designated officer is satisfied with the processes followed in more recent incidents and has no concerns. However, during this visit, the inspectors found that on two occasions, information was not clear and the written records did not match the verbal accounts.

This requirement is not met.

The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents.

(2) The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that—

no child placed with a foster parent is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable. (Regulation 13(1)(2)(b))

The incident that led to the previous monitoring visit being undertaken was addressed with the member of staff concerned and an action plan was put in place to prevent a reoccurrence. However, wider plans to share the learning and expectations with the whole team did not take place. Equally, while there is a behaviour management policy that is available for both foster carers and social work staff to follow, there is no evidence to say that this has been read and understood. The new manager aims to improve practice in this area going forward by introducing a new framework that will underpin and guide foster carers' and staff's practice.

This requirement is not met.

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.

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). (Regulation 17 (1)(2))

The responsible individual acknowledges the shortfalls in staff practice in terms of ensuring that foster carers attend training and that any refusals to undertake it are addressed. The current systems for capturing information and monitoring compliance in this area lack analysis. Therefore, while it is easy to see what training has been completed, it does not enable social workers to identify foster carers' learning needs. The new manager intends to include an opportunity for foster carers to reflect on training in their meetings with social work staff as well as monitoring what and when training is completed.

During this visit, feedback received from foster carers confirmed that they have felt and do feel supported. However, the recent changes in staffing, including the management arrangements, has left some feeling anxious about the future and unsure of who to contact in the meantime. To address this, the responsible individual and new manager are in the process of contacting all foster carers to alleviate some of their concerns. However, they have only seen eight sets of carers out of a possible 17. The new manager is also currently providing out-of-hours support for the agency to ensure that foster carers feel supported and that they receive the correct advice and guidance.

This requirement is not met.

The registered person must maintain a system for—

monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and

**improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.
(Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b))**

The responsible individual acknowledges that the system in place for monitoring and reviewing the quality of care is not effective. She also recognises that the completion and submission of the reports to Ofsted do not meet the requirements. Following the review by the external consultant, the plan is for these reports to be carried out independently using the data from the systems being introduced by the new manager.

This requirement is not met.

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))

The responsible individual acknowledges the areas for development in relation to reporting and notifying significant events. However, following the previous monitoring visit, safeguarding notifications to Ofsted have continued to be of poor quality. They have been submitted by administrative staff and without management oversight, which has resulted in the procedure not being followed correctly. The new manager has taken responsibility for this area and has provided staff with clear guidance about notifiable events and her expectations moving forward.

This requirement is not met.

In conclusion, the inspectors were satisfied that the responsible individual, with the support from the new manager, is fully committed to making the necessary improvements to the agency. The updated action plan reviewed at this visit is a good reflection of what has been achieved to date and how the managers will continue to address the requirements. There is also a renewed commitment to ensuring that children's wishes, feelings and views will be put at the centre of all future development plans and actions.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the agency.

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 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>	5 February 2021
<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.</p> <p>The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for—</p> <p>the prompt referral to the area authority of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by the fostering service provider;</p> <p>notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the fostering service provider, to the Chief Inspector;</p> <p>consideration to be given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children placed with foster parents following an allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b) (3)(b)(c)(e))</p>	5 February 2021
<p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents.</p>	5 February 2021

<p>The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that—</p> <p>no child placed with a foster parent is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(b))</p>	
<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). (Regulation 17 (1) (2))</p>	5 February 2021
<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. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b))</p>	5 February 2021
<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>	5 February 2021
<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. (Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b))</p>	5 February 2021

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account when monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service. ('Fostering Services: National minimum standards', 1.7)
- The registered person should 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. ('Fostering Services: National minimum standards', 25.1)

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 the last monitoring visit.

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

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC376060

Registered provider: Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Suite 5, Enterprise House, The Links, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 7GQ

Responsible individual: Sarah Norman

Registered manager: Caroline Newman

Inspectors

Amanda Harvey, Social Care Inspector
Sarah Olliver, Social Care Inspector
Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2020