

Red Kite Fostering

The Old Surgery, The Meads, Kington, Herefordshire HR5 3DQ

Assurance visit

Information about this independent fostering agency

Red Kite Fostering is a private limited company based in Herefordshire. The agency provides a range of fostering placements, including long-term, short-term, emergency and respite placements.

At the time of the visit, the agency was providing placements for seven children and had seven fostering households. The agency has recruited new fostering households since the last inspection and has a number of foster families in the assessment process.

The registered manager was registered with Ofsted in November 2020.

Visit dates: 16 to 17 December 2020

Previous inspection date: 24 February 2020

Previous inspection judgement: Requires improvement to be good

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred

practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Children are provided with a good standard of care from their foster carers. Children say that they are happy in their placements and that they have positive relationships with their foster carers.

Children are supported by their foster carers to keep in touch with people who are important to them. This has continued throughout the pandemic. COVID-19 risk assessments are in place. This thoughtful care has supported placement stability.

Children's social workers are positive about the care that children receive. Good communication between social workers, foster carers and agency staff supports oversight of children's plans.

Supervising social workers keep up to date and informed about children's needs. The agency keeps a record of discussions and regularly reviews children's behaviour, health and educational needs in partnership with foster carers.

The agency has responded well to the challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, when restrictions were relaxed, children were provided with a day out of their choice. This also provided a day of respite for their carers. The agency has also delivered personalised Christmas hampers to each of their fostering families. These contain treats and a suitable DVD for carers to facilitate a film night for the whole family.

Feedback from children is improving. However, it is not always evident how children's views are captured and used to develop the service.

The agency has supported carers with children's education. This was particularly evident during the period of the pandemic when carers were supported to educate children at home. Foster carers have been provided with additional resources by the agency and, when necessary, staff have supported foster carers to escalate any concerns regarding children's education. The agency has plans in place to further develop and track children's educational progress.

Children are provided with beautiful family books prior to being placed with foster carers. This means that, where possible, children have information about their new foster carers before they are placed with them.

The safety of children

Managers and staff have developed systems to ensure that any safeguarding concerns are effectively managed. Children are safe in their foster placements and say that they feel safe and well cared for. As a result, there have not been any significant incidents and children do not go missing from their foster placements.

Managers ensure that staff, including panel members, are safely recruited.

Panel recommendations are adhered to. The panel provides challenge and scrutiny to the assessment of new carers and the reviews of existing carers. This has improved the quality of care provided to children.

Foster carers have completed a range of training to ensure that they are aware of contextual safeguarding issues, such as radicalisation, exploitation and county lines. Most of this training has been completed online due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Foster carers are required to complete learning outcome forms to demonstrate their understanding of their training and this is also followed up in supervision. This good practice ensures that foster carers have the skills needed to care for children.

Leaders and managers

Managers have enacted the amended regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have used a combination of virtual and face-to-face assessment and supervision arrangements. This has ensured agency operations have been sustained.

Staff in the agency told the inspectors that they feel supported by the registered manager. When supervision takes place, it is reflective, and discussions focus on children's and foster carers' needs. This is beneficial to the staff and gives the registered manager a good overview of the agency.

The quality of information presented to the fostering panel has significantly improved. This enables the panel to make clear and informed recommendations. The panel chair stated that communication between the fostering panel and the agency is good and that carers attend panel and provide positive feedback in respect of the support they receive from the agency.

Throughout the pandemic, foster carers have continued to have supervision. Annual reviews and support visits have also continued to take place. At times, this has been done virtually. Foster carers said that the agency has been responsive to their needs and those of the children by being flexible and undertaking visits to fit in with children's routines.

The registered manager has a range of effective review and monitoring systems in place. These systems continue to develop as the agency has stabilised following a turbulent period.

The registered manager has supported carers to make a formal complaint to the placing authority and to the ombudsman when the service provided to a child fell short of what was expected. Managers and staff are good advocates for children.

Foster carers provide positive feedback about the support they receive and the positive relationships they have with the staff in the agency. The agency has recruited new carers and has a number of fostering families who are currently being assessed.

The shortfalls identified at the last inspection have been met with the exception of one recommendation, which is repeated.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. (Fostering services: National minimum standards, 1.3)

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC417504

Registered provider: Red Kite Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Rhos House, Old Radnor, Presteigine, Powys LD8 2RP

Responsible individual: Carole Barnes

Registered manager: Amelia Benson

Inspectors

Annemarie Parker, Social Care Inspector
Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector

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