

Nurture Fostering Ltd

The Old Fire Station, 340 Lewisham High Street, London SE13 6LE

Assurance visit

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency has been registered with Ofsted since December 2017. The fostering agency provides a range of placements for children on a planned or emergency basis for short- or long-term duration, and for respite care. The agency also offers parent and child placements.

The agency has 11 fostering households, with 11 children in placement at the time of this visit.

The current manager was registered on the 26 February 2019.

Visit dates: 3 to 4 February 2021

Previous inspection date: 25 February 2019

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 benefit from nurturing care and are thriving despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Children's social workers spoke unanimously about the progress children are making and the positive attachments children form with their carers. When children move into new foster homes these plans are well paced and child centred.

Carers sensitively facilitate contact to ensure this is a fun and positive experience for children. Carers have shown great flexibility in adapting to the changing requirements between face-to-face and telephone/online contact during the pandemic.

One of the agency's strengths is the support for children to access education. All school-age children attend full time and are making progress. Previous gaps in provision and support are well addressed in partnership with schools and local authority staff. Carers demonstrate tenacity and creativity during periods of school closures in supporting children's remote learning.

Overall, children are getting the right help at the right time with proactive support from carers. Children are helped by their carers to keep up exercise outdoors during periods of lockdown, with good use of local parks. However, difficulties for a very small number of children in registering with a local general medical practitioner have not been sufficiently challenged or addressed. This in turn limits children's access to some local health services.

The safety of children

Children receive consistent and positive care from their carers. House rules and consequences are negotiated with children and advice is sought from a wide range of external professionals around strategies. There are no concerns about children going missing from their foster homes or being involved in exploitative relationships.

Respite support to carers is planned in a child-centred way, for example, support workers spending time in children's own foster homes. Foster carers spoke very highly of the support from the agency staff, describing quick responses, including out of hours.

Carers have a good understanding of possible risks to children while they are spending increased time online during the pandemic, including using games consoles. Carers have received a wide range of training around safeguarding issues which they can describe putting into practice.

Risks to children are discussed in detail in carers' supervision and with children's social workers. However, children's risk assessments do not clearly set out actions and approaches for carers to take to reduce risks to children. Children's risk assessments and safer care plans are not up to date and do not always reflect new or emerging risks.

Leaders and managers

Foster carers unanimously praise the support provided by leaders and managers. One spoke of feeling like part of an 'extended family'. Foster carers benefit from regular supervision and local, small support groups. They are well prepared for their role, through training, management guidance and 24-hour support. New carers benefit from an experienced carer providing support as their 'buddy'.

Children are spoken to by supervising social workers, but their views are not always well recorded following visits. Children's views, particularly what they think they have done well, could better inform their matching and progress reports.

Leaders and managers have appropriately used the regulatory 'flexibilities' in the best interests of children, however, the rationale and decision-making was not recorded at the time. The agency benefits from a highly experienced external agency decision-maker who provides robust challenge on practice recommendations. A number of annual reviews of foster carers are delayed, in part due to challenges in completing foster carer medicals during the ongoing pandemic.

One requirement made at the last inspection has been met. One requirement made at the last inspection continues to be an area of leadership that needs to be strengthened. Internal reviews on the quality of care provided by the agency have not been received by Ofsted. This has reduced the oversight of children's welfare between inspections. Quality assurance continues to be underdeveloped, although monthly audits are starting to address gaps in record-keeping.

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 fostering service provider must promote the health and development of children placed with foster parents.</p> <p>In particular the fostering service provider must ensure that each child—</p> <p>is a registered patient with a general medical practitioner who provides primary medical services under Part 4 of the National Health Service Act 2006,</p> <p>has access to such medical, dental, nursing, psychological and psychiatric advice, treatment and other services as the child may require (Regulation 15 (1) (2)(a)(b))</p>	1 May 2021
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals.</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. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(2))</p>	1 May 2021

Recommendation

- The registered provider should ensure children's safety and welfare is promoted in all fostering placements. In particular, achieving consistency of good practice in relation to written risk management (individual children's safe care) plans. (National Minimum Standards, 4.1)

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 1265010

Registered provider: Nurture Fostering Ltd

Registered provider address: Meriden Hall, Main Road, Meriden, Coventry, Warks
CV7 7PT

Responsible individual: Jillian Valenti

Registered manager: Jennifer Walker

Inspector

Brenda McInerney, Her Majesty's Inspector Social Care

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