

SWAP Foster Care

43–47 Kings Street, Bedworth, Warwickshire CV12 8NB

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately run independent fostering agency provides short- and long-term placements, and parent and child placements. At the time of this monitoring inspection, the agency was providing care for 67 children and three parents. The agency had 35 fostering households.

The manager was registered by Ofsted on 17 June 2020. However, she is not currently in day-to-day charge of the agency. The deputy manager is currently covering for the manager.

Inspection date: 10 February 2021

Date of previous inspection: 30 May 2017

This monitoring visit

This independent fostering agency was last inspected by Ofsted in May 2017. In recent months, the agency has had one serious incident.

Due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, Ofsted did not carry out a physical visit to the agency. Inspectors gathered evidence in several different ways, including talking to the acting manager, staff and foster carers. Feedback was gathered from children and placing authorities. The acting manager was also asked to provide documents electronically for the inspector to review.

This monitoring inspection is a focused review of the service and has not considered all elements of the fostering agency that would be covered in a full inspection.

Inspectors have found omissions in management oversight of the service. As a result, Ofsted has reached the decision to issue a compliance notice under regulation 11 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

Although the agency has made some progress against the requirements and

recommendations raised at the last inspection, there remain some shortfalls. For example, there are ongoing shortfalls in record-keeping.

Managers have improved the training available to foster carers. However, it is not always clear whether foster carers receive specialist training to meet the needs of bespoke placements for a parent and their child. For example, foster carers can be asked to record observations of the parent and their child. However, despite this requirement, some foster carers have not received training in child development and/or attachment theory before a placement is confirmed.

There continue to be some shortfalls in how staff record matching decisions. Consequently, it is not always clear how foster carers' skills and experience are matched against children's individual needs. Similarly, matching decisions for parent and child placements fail to show how carers have the skills to meet parents' additional needs. As a result, the agency is not consistently able to demonstrate how its decision-making promotes children's welfare.

Omissions in risk assessments and safe care plans remain. Risk assessments and safe care plans are not always individualised. Risk assessments lack clear guidance to enable foster carers to manage risk safely. For example, despite there being a known risk of sexualised behaviour between a sibling group, this information was missed off the risk assessments and safe care plans for the children. This is a significant missed opportunity to safeguard children.

Managers have not ensured that foster carers always have the agreement that they need to make decisions about the children in their care. This restricts foster carers' ability to fulfil their responsibilities for children's day-to-day care without unnecessary intervention.

Social workers do not ensure that placement plans for bespoke parent and child placements contain the specific detail about the care that needs to be provided. For example, sleeping arrangements are not clearly defined. These plans do not provide foster carers with guidance on how to manage presenting factors of the parent. This leaves foster carers without the essential, clear information that they need about the care they are providing or information about how to address concerns that may arise.

There is an absence of information to demonstrate how the agency has considered the potential risks when children are sharing a bedroom, or how these arrangements have been agreed with the children's social worker.

Managers do not ensure that complaints are progressed in line with the agency's policy. As a result, it is not always clear that complainants are aware of the outcome of their complaint.

A lack of management understanding of regulation and guidance has had a negative impact on the agency's practice. For example, the agency does not consistently

ensure that foster carers who have been subject to an allegation have their approval to foster reviewed. In addition, lack of management understanding of the process for accepting a foster carer's resignation and a failure to explain the impact of this to the foster carer has resulted in a lack of transparency for foster carers about the reasons for their attendance at panel.

The agency has experienced a significant safeguarding incident. Following this incident, the agency has worked with wider professionals to ensure that the required processes are followed. However, the agency's internal investigation lacks scrutiny. This is a missed opportunity to reflect on practice and to drive improvement from within the service.

Managers have not ensured that the regulator has received a quality of care report or an up-to-date version of the agency's statement of purpose. This shortfall prevents the regulator from having up-to-date information about the service.

Despite these management omissions, foster carers ensure that the experiences of children are positive. The majority of children are living in long-term placements and children report that they are happy with their foster carers. Good communication between the agency and placing authorities helps to ensure that children's plans are progressed.

Foster carer feedback about the agency is overwhelmingly positive. Foster carers feel well supported in their role. Similarly, staff told inspectors that managers are readily available to them and that managers ensure that staff have the support required to enable them to continue to fulfil their roles during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One requirement and two recommendations raised at the last inspection were not reviewed at this monitoring inspection. These will be considered at the next full inspection of 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 fostering service provider must compile a written statement in relation to the fostering service ("the statement of purpose") which consists of—</p> <p>a statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service, and</p> <p>a statement as to the services and facilities (including any parent and child arrangements) provided by the fostering service.</p> <p>(Regulation 3 (1)(a)(b))</p>	30 April 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.</p> <p>(Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>This particularly refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ having a secure filing system ■ ensuring that complaints received by the agency are progressed in line with the agency policy to ensure transparency in the process for everyone involved ■ ensuring that foster carers receive clear information about processes within the agency relating to panel and the reasons for any panel presentation ■ managers implementing a system to monitor the quality 	30 April 2021

<p>and content of records and ensuring that action is taken to address shortfalls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managers ensuring that agency investigations are of sufficient detail to support learning and development. 	
<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 (1)(a))</p> <p>This particularly refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring that matching of foster carers and children clearly demonstrates how foster carers are equipped to meet children's needs and where there are gaps, the plan should address these drafting and maintaining suitable risk assessments ensuring that, where children are required to share a bedroom, the fostering service demonstrates that they have assessed all relevant factors, that this assessment has been shared with the placing authority and the authority has given agreement to the plan ensuring that parent and child placement plans provide detail of the practical care arrangements and the actions foster carers should take in the case of concern. 	18 April 2021
<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. (Regulation 17 (1))</p>	30 April 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.</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.</p>	30 April 2021

(Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2))

This particularly refers to providing HMCI with a copy of any written report produced in relation to this regulation.

* This requirement is subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers have the relevant delegated authority in place and where this has not been provided, this omission is escalated to the placing authority. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 19, paragraph 7.4)
- The registered person should ensure that reviews of each carer include an appraisal of performance against clear and consistent standards set by the agency, and consideration of training and development needs, which are documented in the review report. The foster carer's personal development plan is reviewed and the effectiveness of training and development is evaluated. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 41, paragraph 20.6)
- The registered person should ensure that as soon as possible after an investigation into a foster carer is concluded, that their approval as suitable to foster is reviewed. The agency should clearly define this process and this information should be available to foster carers.
- The registered person should ensure that a written record of all staff supervision is kept. The record includes the time, date and length of each supervision and the record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 49, paragraph 24.5)
- The registered person should ensure that, in cases where a foster carer wishes to resign from the agency, the foster carer is provided with information to confirm that this will automatically take effect after 28 days regardless of whether the foster carer wishes to withdraw their notice. This is particularly relevant where the foster carers has children placed in their care whose care plans may be disrupted as a result of this action. (Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services', page 18)

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: SC409413

Registered provider: Social Work Assessment Partners Limited

Registered provider address: Mitre House, School Road, Bulkington, Bedworth, Warwickshire CV12 9JB

Responsible individual: Lorraine Walker

Registered manager: Jessica Robertson

Inspectors

Tracey Coglan Greig, Social Care Inspector

Jodie Lewis, Social Care Inspector

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