

Fostering Together

Unit 7 Haguelands Farm, Burmarsh Road, Burmarsh, Kent TN29 0JR

Assurance visit

Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency was registered with Ofsted in August 2020.

The agency offers short- and long-term fostering for children, including children with disabilities and complex life-limiting medical needs.

There is currently one fostering household with three children placed.

Visit dates: 2 to 3 March 2021

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

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

The children have been well cared for during the COVID-19 pandemic. Foster carers have taken measures to ensure that the children are protected during the lockdown periods. For example, they have been shielding due to the children's complex health needs. The children have stability, specialist support and benefit from good-quality care. They have formed trusting, nurturing and consistent relationships with their foster carers. The foster carers' records are detailed and informative, providing the agency with a clear picture of the children's progress.

The foster carers support the children to maintain important relationships with their family and friends. They have utilised video calls during the COVID-19 restrictions to maintain communication effectively outside of the family home. Video calls have also been used for specialist appointments to ensure that the children's health needs are being effectively monitored.

The children have maintained learning through home schooling. The foster carers have also engaged them in a wide range of activities, such as sensory play, singing and virtual music lessons. As a result, the children continue to be given learning opportunities and new experiences.

The children are highly valued by their foster carers, who demonstrate a commitment to respecting and promoting each child's personal identity. However, as the children progress into their teenage years, further consideration should be given to each child's cultural needs and their changing needs.

The safety of children

There have been no concerns raised regarding the safety of the children in this agency. The agency is new and is in the process of recruiting more foster carers. The panel members have been recruited in accordance with safer recruitment guidance and the agency staff and foster carers have received appropriate safeguarding training. They speak positively about training opportunities that enhance their skills to care for the children.

Detailed risk assessments and safer care plans provide the foster carers with clear strategies to follow in order to prevent and minimise risks for the children. Supervising social workers have reviewed these plans with foster carers and sought the views of the children's social workers. As a result, relevant professionals' views are incorporated into the plans to keep children safe.

A new system has been implemented for recording and reporting. This gives transparency between foster carer diaries, supervising social workers and leaders

and managers. Consequently, leaders and managers have effective oversight and address any concerns arising immediately.

Leaders and managers

Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of the agency. They are developing the agency with the shared values underpinned by a secure base model. They have included the staff and foster carers in reviews of training and the new recording system. A child-focused culture is developing.

Foster carers have felt well supported through their supervision and training. The foster carers that have transferred from other agencies are all experienced and have been trained in the secure base model. The foster carers spoke positively about their introduction to this agency. Currently, supervision and training has been provided online. However, the agency is planning on resuming face-to-face interactions when it is safe to do so.

Currently, all the foster carers have transferred in from another agency. The quality of the assessments presented to the panel has been good. The panel members have a variety of experience and have asked relevant questions when foster carers have attended panel. Feedback from foster carers about their panel experience has been positive. The quality of panel minutes and the agency decision maker notes are good. These records detail exploration of matters arising through the assessment process and show a clear rationale for any recommendations made.

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

Recommendation

- Children are provided with personalised care that meets their needs and promotes all aspects of their individual identity. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 2.1)

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2574877

Registered provider: Fostering Together Ltd

Registered provider address: Fostering Together Ltd is Unit 7 Haguelands Farm, Burmarsh Road, Burmarsh, Kent TN29 0JR

Responsible individual: Matthew Foulkes

Registered manager: Patricia McMullan

Inspectors

Sarah Olliver, Social Care Inspector
Alphie Khumalo, Social Care Inspector

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