

Isp Teynham

Castlewood Farm, Conyer Road, Teynham Sittingbourne ME9 9EA

Assurance visit

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned independent fostering agency. The fostering service was registered with Ofsted in September 2017 to become a separately registered branch of the ISP company.

The company is a part of a much larger organisation, Polaris Community, comprising of several independent fostering agencies.

Foster carers provide long-term, short-term, respite and permanent care placements. The fostering service also provides placements to disabled children, as well as parent and child placements. At the time of the inspection, there were 68 approved fostering households, caring for 92 children.

Visit dates: 10 to 11 March 2021

Previous inspection date: 30 July 2018

Previous inspection judgement: 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 have been well supported by committed carers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Children have been enabled to engage effectively in their education through the support provided to foster carers by the agency. Children and foster carers have enjoyed taking part in the social get togethers facilitated virtually by agency staff. Foster carers consistently shared excellent feedback to inspectors about the support provided by the agency during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children have been suitably matched to their foster family. This is due to children's individual needs being well understood by agency staff. The needs of children already living within the foster family have been appropriately considered. The child-focused approach to matching has helped to ensure effective support plans are put in place. Through the sound understanding of children's needs, the agency has ensured that experienced foster carers are looking after them.

Consultation with children by the registered manager is a strength of the agency. Children share their views and experiences of being looked after, and the manager responds in a meaningful way to use these views to shape the service. This shows that children's views are really valued. There are excellent examples of children's guides which are age-appropriate. Children's views informed the development of these which include an appropriate focus on children's rights.

Foster carers are provided with timely training and learning opportunities. These, together with reflective supervision provided by the supervising social workers, support them to look after children well. The transfer of foster carers from another agency within the organisation was well managed. Foster carers shared positive feedback about their experiences of this and praised the effective handover process.

The safety of children

Children's individual vulnerabilities and known risks are well understood by staff. The individual risk management plans in place to mitigate these risks are very detailed. This information provides both staff and foster carers with clear strategies to help keep children safe. These plans are regularly reviewed and updated in response to any new and emerging risks. However, a risk management plan for one child was not updated to include all relevant information which could have informed the agreed safety plan.

The agency provides staff with a range of both formal training and informal learning opportunities. Supervision provided to staff creates a safe space for them to individually reflect on their own practice. Where individual practice issues are identified, the registered manager addresses these within supervision. This, together with training, supports the strong safeguarding culture within the staff team.

Where there have been a small number of concerns about foster carers, these have been appropriately responded to. Supervising social workers have appropriately undertaken unannounced visits to fostering households. The agency has clear expectations of foster carers in relation to the quality of care that they provide to children. Practice is closely monitored to ensure that these expectations are met. Investigations relating to the limited number of allegations have been managed well.

There has been effective oversight of concerns by the fostering panel. Supervising social workers have provided detailed reports to the panel which have informed decision-making. The quality of updated assessments of foster carers provided to the panel has been good. Panel meetings have been well chaired, and suitable recommendations are made in relation to the development needs and the range of children's needs that foster carers are equipped to cater for.

Leaders and managers

The registered manager has been effective in their response to COVID-19. They have appropriately assessed the related health and safety risks to staff, foster carers and children. There have been effective measures put in place to mitigate these risks. This has ensured an appropriate use of the flexibilities permitted by the Adoption and Children (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. The registered manager has communicated the use of such measures well to both staff and foster carers.

Staff who spoke to inspectors described good support from the registered manager during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included regular team meetings held virtually which brought together existing and new staff, who have recently transferred to the agency. This period of change management has also been monitored effectively by the responsible individual through weekly meetings.

The responsible individual has maintained good oversight through tracking outcomes for individual children. However, they have not provided direct line management supervision to the registered manager. Supervision has been provided by an experienced senior member of the leadership team which, although this is welcomed by the registered manager and provided on a regular basis, it does not include a specific focus on safeguarding.

The appraisal for the registered manager did not enable effective tracking of agreed actions completed by the registered manager. This requirement from the last inspection is, therefore, not met.

There was a separate requirement in respect of monitoring the quality of care provided. The registered manager was delayed in sharing the monitoring report with Ofsted and the last report is awaiting completion. This means that there is not an up-to-date review of the service. This is important in the context of the significant changes within the service, including the recent transfer of foster carers from another agency within the organisation. This requirement was also not met.

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 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>(Regulation 35 1(a)(b))</p>	30 April 2021
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them—</p> <p>receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, and</p> <p>are enabled from time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform.</p> <p>(Regulation 21 (4)(a)(b))</p>	30 April 2021

Recommendations

- The service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. This includes updating risk assessments as required. ('National Minimum Standards', page 14, 4.5). In particular, ensure the review of individual risk management plans for children, includes all relevant information.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 1256563

Registered provider: ISP

Registered provider address: Partnerships In Childcare Services Ltd, Wavendon Tower, Ortensia Drive, Wavendon, Milton Keynes MK17 8LX

Responsible individual: Tracy Livesey

Registered manager: Pradeep Heera

Inspector(s)

Maria Lonergan, 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 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

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 2021