

Flourish Fostering

Flourish Fostering Limited

The Cedars, Holborough Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5PL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in April 2020. The manager registered with Ofsted on 6 April 2020.

Foster carers provide long-term respite and permanent care placements. The fostering service also provides placements for children with disabilities, as well as parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 30 approved fostering households providing care for a total of 50 children.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 24 February 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 21 to 25 June 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are looked after by committed, empathic and nurturing foster carers. The comprehensive assessments completed by the agency help foster carers to develop an in-depth understanding of each child's needs and how best to care for them. Children experience thoughtful care which is based on the agency's therapeutic approach to supporting the children and the foster family.

Foster carers are strong advocates for children. They provide highly effective support to children in terms of their learning and day-to-day living. Through this support, some children who previously felt unable to engage in education, now do so extremely well. Foster carers are persistent in advocating to support children's health needs. This is a particular strength, particularly for some children who now receive specialist support that was previously unavailable to them.

Children share consistently positive feedback about their foster carers, with one child commenting that they 'did not give up on me'. This helped the child to feel safe and enabled them to feel settled and secure with their foster family. A child told inspectors how much they enjoy the wide range of activities, including a picnic held in the grounds of the agency. Another child said that they really appreciate how the agency 'always goes the extra mile' in supporting them and their foster carers.

The child-centred comments from foster carers demonstrate the aspirational values of the agency. One foster carer described their role in supporting a child by saying, 'As a young man who wants to fly, my role is to give him the wings.'

External professionals share excellent feedback about the quality of care provided to children and the difference this has made to their lives. One professional reflected on the impact for one child who had avoided becoming involved in offending behaviour through the dedicated support of their current foster family.

Training provided to foster carers is innovative and thought-provoking. This includes the use of virtual reality headsets to demonstrate the impact of neglect and abuse through the eyes of a baby and child. This helps foster carers to develop an empathic understanding of trauma and how this relates to difficult early childhood experiences. Feedback from both prospective and established foster carers confirms that this approach to training provides a unique perspective and is highly valued.

The induction for foster carers is thorough and based on a comprehensive handbook. This helps foster carers to develop a clear understanding of the caring role and the high standard of care that is expected of them. Foster carers are provided with additional guidance to help them to understand how best to meet children's individual cultural needs. This excellent resource helps the agency to thoughtfully match individual children with the most suitable foster family.

The fostering panel is provided with detailed assessments of foster carers. This helps the panel members to make sound decisions when approving prospective carers. The panel chairperson is highly experienced, and their empowering approach helps panel members to collectively reach well-informed recommendations. The agency decision-maker is equally methodical in undertaking the responsibilities of their role. This ensures a meticulous process to the approval of suitable people to provide care to children.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding

Children's needs and vulnerabilities are well understood by supervising social workers. The agency provides specialised assessments to identify all known risks for children, based on a therapeutic assessment of their individual needs. This provides staff with detailed guidance and clear strategies to help mitigate the particular risks for each child. Through involving children and foster carers in this assessment process, the risk management plans in place help children to develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe. These are reviewed regularly to ensure that they address any new emerging risks for children.

Supervising social workers have extensive knowledge of safeguarding practice. They use regular supervision meetings with each foster carer to provide considerable support and detailed guidance about how to keep children safe. Supervision meetings include a focused discussion on known risks for children. Detailed recordings of supervision meetings provide clear expectations for foster carers with regard to providing safe care for children. There is a cohesive approach to the recording of safeguarding concerns across children's and carers' files.

Foster carers are helped to develop very detailed plans for providing safe care in the home. This helps foster carers to set appropriate expectations for children and helps to provide clear boundaries for all in the foster family. The way in which foster carers help children to understand how risks need to be managed is based on a non-judgemental approach. The whole staff team role models this approach to risk. This means that children feel able to learn from mistakes and to seek help when they need it.

Supervising social workers are highly effective in their work with statutory agencies. They are unrelenting in their commitment to advocating for children's needs, to ensure that known risks are addressed. This is particularly effective in some situations where children's known risks also potentially impact on the safety of other children.

Through its collaborative approach to working with foster carers and professionals, the team has helped to reduce the risks for children. The social work assistant, agency psychotherapist and supervising social workers work as a team to provide focused, well-informed support to children.

This has made a positive difference in terms of enhancing the life chances of children and keeping them safe. In one example, a child who used to go missing from care, now no longer does so.

The one allegation made against a foster carer was unsubstantiated following a detailed internal investigation. In this case, and in the assessment process for prospective foster carers, the agency has demonstrated a consistently effective approach to working with external safeguarding professionals.

The agency follows safer recruitment practice for staff. Children have been involved in developing recruitment questions for when new staff are appointed. This ensures that staff who apply to work for the agency are asked questions about the things that matter most to the children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is very experienced and dedicated to providing high-quality care to children. The excellent support provided during the COVID-19 pandemic was really appreciated by foster carers. The registered manager leads a very experienced staff team. The strong therapeutic ethos of the agency is well embedded and highly valued by foster carers and staff. This was captured well by one child, who told inspectors that the agency 'goes the extra mile to make sure everyone is ok'.

The responsible individual provides excellent support to the registered manager. They contribute significantly to the agency through applying their therapeutic expertise in supporting children and training foster carers. Together, the registered manager and responsible individual lead a committed and enthusiastic team, where all members of staff are valued as individuals and for the contribution, they each bring to the team.

The staff team shares very positive feedback about the support it receives from the management team. There is a focus on valuing staff's skills and helping them to develop their knowledge. Supervising social workers are provided with a comprehensive training programme, which includes a bespoke diploma in therapeutic fostering. The agency encourages staff, foster carers and panel members to participate in the extensive training available.

The registered manager has keen oversight of the quality of care provided by the agency. This helps them to develop a good understanding of the strengths of the agency and to identify areas for development. The monitoring systems in place enable them to maintain effective oversight of the progress that children make. There are times when foster carers are only required to submit their recording on a monthly basis. This can present a challenge for the manager to have real-time access and oversight of events.

The registered manager provides regular good-quality supervision to staff. There is a clear written record of this, including agreed actions. The responsible individual undertakes regular supervision with the registered manager. This is of good quality.

The responsible individual and the registered manager are both tenacious advocates for children and are effective in challenging professionals where this is needed. They have developed collaborative partnership working with other organisations. There is a positive development plan for the agency, which is both child-centred and ambitious.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service has and implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the fostering service's files, on the child's files and on case files relating to foster carers. In particular, guidance regarding the frequency of written logs completed by carers should be reviewed, to enable regular management oversight of children's records. ('Fostering Services: National minimum standards', 26.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2568217

Registered provider: Flourish Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: The Cedars, Holborough Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5PL

Responsible individual: Michelle Brunton-Douglas

Registered manager: Karen Heard

Telephone number: 01634 969050

Inspectors

Maria Lonergan, Social Care Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

Suzy Lemmy, Social Care Inspector

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