

Achieving For Children

Achieving For Children Community Interest Company

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Town Hall, St. Ives Road,
Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1RF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Achieving For Children independent fostering agency for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead registered with Ofsted in July 2020.

Achieving For Children is a community interest company which was created in 2014 by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames to provide their children's services. The agency delivers fostering services to children in these three boroughs. This report refers to the registration for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead part of the agency.

The fostering service provides the following types of placement: short term, long term, specialist, respite, emergency and sibling placements.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 49 fostering households carers and 64 children in placement.

The registered manager post is vacant.

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.

Inspection dates: 2 to 6 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: N/A

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The children spoke positively about their relationships with their foster carers. These relationships are built on trust and mutual respect. A child said, 'the carers keep doing it [caring for me] really well, they need to keep it up.' Many children describe feeling part of the family and recognise their foster carers as parents who provide them with safe, consistent care. As a result, overall, there is good placement stability.

The children are making good progress. In one example, a child is making progress that was initially not thought possible. The social worker said, 'He is clearly thriving and has made terrific progress. The way the foster carer writes about him is very enthusiastic and positive about what he has done and what he has achieved.'

The foster carers have made great efforts during the pandemic to maintain the children's education. The children are making educational progress, which is reflected in their personal education plans. A child said, 'It's good, I'm happy here, it's very relaxing. I'm doing my GCSEs and making plans for college.'

The agency is creative in meeting the children's needs. In one example, a child who was in hospital from birth was visited by foster carers from the outset. They built a relationship with the child and were subsequently matched as the foster carers when the child was discharged from hospital. Another example was providing healthy ready meals for a foster carer who found mealtimes a challenge due to the children's differing developmental needs.

Specialist support is available. When the children have emerging needs, therapeutic support and referrals for specialist help are made. The team around the child meets regularly to discuss emerging issues. An example was seen where some short breaks were built in for siblings to give them time away from each other. This reduced sibling rivalry and gave the children opportunities to explore their identity independently of each other.

However, in some cases, foster carers were ill prepared for the challenge of caring for teenagers. In more than one long-term placement, when the children's needs changed during their teens, long-term placements ended quickly. As a result, there are missed opportunities to support long-term foster carers with the skills to equip them for the challenges that can arise in caring for teenagers.

Professionals in the children's network spoke positively of the culture of joined-up working. However, the children's voice is not always strong and evident. For example, in some stability meetings, the child's voice was missing and it was unclear what efforts had been made to ensure that the child's voice was heard.

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

Safeguarding children is a priority. Any safeguarding concerns are promptly reported. Where appropriate, concerns are shared with safeguarding partners. The designated officer reflected that the information the agency share is appropriate, timely and relevant. The transparency of information shared helps to keep the children safe.

When there have been concerns regarding foster carers, clear fact finding takes place and appropriate referrals are made to the wider safeguarding network. When foster carers' practice has fallen short of expectations, action is taken to address this.

Safer care plans reviewed on inspection varied in quality. Some were very child-focused and contained clear strategies for the foster carers to follow. Others missed significant information about recent events. This is a missed opportunity to develop clear strategies for the foster carers to follow.

The foster carers act as advocates for the children. In one example, the foster carers raised concerns regarding a medical intervention for a child. This is a good example of the carers being champions for the children.

The agency training offer is good. Bespoke training is given to enable the foster carers to gain skills to provide care to children with specific needs. Carer-led training took place in the fostering fortnight. This is well received and a good opportunity for skilled foster carers to share their knowledge with newer foster carers. Training has been delivered online during COVID-19, which has increased participation. Plans to resume face-to-face training are underway, focusing on child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

The panel has continued online during the lockdowns. The central list has become more varied, in terms of member experience and diversity with panel remaining quorate. The panel minutes are detailed and capture the quality of discussion. Panel members ask relevant questions and, in general, the quality of reports presented to the panel is of a good standard.

Safer recruitment checks are in place. However, in one example, gaps in employment history had not been sufficiently explored. Furthermore, the recruitment process did not show relevant questions had been asked about the information supplied by the applicant. This is a missed opportunity to rigorously follow safer recruitment practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager post is vacant. Senior leaders have been quick to respond and contract a team manager who is familiar with the service. The service manager and responsible individual are described as present, available and supportive. Consequently, the staff feel well supported and morale is good.

Members of the senior leadership team have high aspirations for the service. They continue to develop the service and raise standards for the children through a comprehensive development plan. Their vision for excellence is clear to the staff and foster carers, who share their high aspirations.

Supervision for the staff and foster carers is frequent. There are some examples of high support and high challenge and there are some other areas that could be improved. For example, some foster carer logs were poor quality or totally missing for long periods of time. Foster carer supervision records did not consistently show this being challenged. This is a missed opportunity to provide the children with clear records of their time with their foster carers.

Managerial monitoring is largely good. The leaders and managers had an awareness of most of the issues raised during this inspection. However, some of the information provided in the annual report referred to the other registrations that form part of this community interest.

Practice has continued to develop. For example, placement stability meetings are occurring early to consider support for the foster carers to maintain the placement. However, there has been one occasion where a child with complex needs was placed with inexperienced foster carers, that resulted in an unplanned ending. This was a missed opportunity for leaders and managers to adhere to the supervising social worker's recommendation for new foster carers to begin with short breaks.

A sense of community has been maintained through virtual meetings. However, leaders and managers recognise the importance of face-to-face visits and have continued these, when reasonably practicable. Future plans include resuming physical meetings and events when the situation allows.

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 not— employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person— is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform, and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1.</p> <p>Regulation 20 (1)(a)(3)(1)(c) Schedule 1</p>	<p>12/09/2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children are provided with personalised care that meets their needs and promotes all aspects of their individual identity. Specifically, that foster carers are prepared for the changing needs of teenagers and the dynamics of current teenage life.
(‘Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards’, 2.1, page 10)
- The registered person should ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. Specifically, that safer care plans contain relevant information regarding the child’s specific needs, and clear strategies for the foster carers to follow.
(‘Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards’, 4.5, page 14)
- The registered person should ensure that people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service have a good knowledge and experience of law and practice relating to looked after children. Specifically, the logs that foster carers provide should contain clear information about the child’s day-to-day life.
(‘Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards’, 17.1, page 34)

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: 2576030

Registered provider: Achieving For Children Community Interest Company

Registered provider address: 42 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BW

Responsible individual: Matthew Edwards

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 01628 683 201

Inspectors

Sarah Olliver, Social Care Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

Skye Frain, Social Care Inspector

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