

Children of Colour Limited

Children of Colour Limited

102 to 116 Windmill Road, Croydon, London CR0 2XQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned, independent agency is based in the London Borough of Croydon. It provides services for children aged from two to 18 years. The primary aim of the agency is to provide high-quality foster placements to meet children's diverse needs.

The agency provides emergency, respite, short- and long-term foster placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 28 approved fostering households and 27 children were placed through the agency. Five young adults were also living with their foster carers in staying put arrangements.

The agency registered in May 2004. The manager registered at the same time.

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.

Inspectors were aware that a serious incident had occurred at the setting since the previous inspection, which remains under investigation by the appropriate authorities. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. However, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered, where appropriate, alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform the inspector's judgements.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 August 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people , taking into account	Inadequate
How well children and young people are helped and protected	Inadequate
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate

There are serious failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

Date of last inspection: 1 October 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate

Most children placed with this agency benefit from good outcomes. However, a recent serious incident has occurred since the last full inspection. Leaders and managers failed to take appropriate action in response to this incident, which left children, foster carers and staff vulnerable. This has resulted in the inadequate judgement.

Not all children benefit from a meaningful record of what happens in their daily lives. Despite the agency having a clear computerised recording system, some foster carers do not keep a record of children's day-to-day experiences. This is particularly important when there are health concerns.

Children benefit from stable, long-term placements. Children make positive attachments, with some of them fondly referring to foster carers as 'relatives'. Throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, foster carers have demonstrated resilience, and most are focused on helping children to achieve their potential. However, not all foster carers received the required support and monitoring during the ongoing pandemic.

Most children are happier, more confident, have increased self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Children generally thrive within nurturing foster homes which meet their individual needs. Children enjoy a range of new experiences, including holidays away with their foster family.

Foster carers are ambitious for children and they take pride in children's achievements. Children have obtained college and university places, passed their exams, graded in karate, become a head prefect, a referee and received a wide range of awards and certificates.

Foster carers value education and strongly advocate for additional resources and the best schools. The advocacy role extends to children's health needs. Children's physical health and mental health are improving, and they are receiving the necessary therapeutic support.

Children's social workers provided the inspector with feedback. They gave examples of positive care provided by foster carers. An example is a foster carer staying with a child throughout their hospital admission. A social work manager highlighted foster carers who they stated are 'meeting all needs, physically, emotionally, and psychologically'.

A growing number of young people are choosing to remain with their foster carers under effectively planned staying put arrangements. Others maintain their relationships once they move on, for example by contributing to the agency's introductory training for prospective foster carers.

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

There has been one serious incident since the last inspection, where a child was not safeguarded. Supervising social workers have not consistently followed the agency's own procedure regarding virtual supervisory visits during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, it is the expectation that when a face-to-face supervisory visit is not undertaken, a video call is completed in its place. However, this has not always happened.

Supervising social workers do not always scrutinise the care children are provided with by their foster carers. For example, a baby was found to be sleeping in a separate room and placed in a cot on their stomach to sleep. Foster carers were not following the agency's safer sleeping policy, and this was not enforced by their supervising social worker.

Risk assessments and safer caring plans are very basic. They do not sufficiently detail the specific health needs of individual children. The management of children's health needs is not clearly recorded in safer caring plans.

Not all supervising social workers demonstrate a safeguarding mindset. Supervisory visits do not focus routinely on safeguarding children and promoting foster carers' development. Staff have not had regular safeguarding, paediatric first-aid or caring for babies training.

Leaders and managers work well with safeguarding personnel. Leaders and managers notify Ofsted of the instigation of a child protection enquiry. However, the outcome of the enquiry is not always reported, as required.

Leaders and managers have reflected that there are lessons learned from a serious incident and have indicated their intention to review and amend practice as a result. Foster carers caring for babies have now received the appropriate training. Leaders and managers have also undertaken unannounced visits of foster carers' homes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers recognise that they have failed to provide sufficient challenge and scrutiny to staff and foster carers, to ensure that all children benefit from good-quality care. A comprehensive action plan has been developed, which focuses on making significant improvements.

Leaders and managers complete an annual quality of care review and report; however, this has not been sent to Ofsted, as required. Leaders and managers have sought feedback from stakeholders and carers. However, this information is not included in the quality of care review report.

Leaders and managers have not always ensured that staff and foster carers have had first-aid training or training specific to the needs of children in their care.

Despite supervising social workers receiving regular supervision and the opportunity to reflect on their work, this did not identify the failings of some supervisory visits. In addition, some staff have not received an annual appraisal. Therefore, opportunities have been missed to identify poor practice and areas for staff development.

Feedback from foster carers is positive and they would recommend the agency. Foster carers benefit from the 24-hour support they receive. Foster carers are provided with informative support groups, regular training, respite and an informal mentoring scheme for new carers. Male foster carers also have an additional support group.

Vocational training for all foster carers is available to ensure that their practice meets a recognised standard. Foster carers praise the quality of the training. A recent example of this is the trauma training, which was described very positively.

The agency benefits from a challenging panel chair and a constructive agency decision-maker. Both are highly experienced individuals who demonstrate a strong commitment to quality assurance. However, some panel members have not had an annual appraisal.

Foster carers have a range of expertise, which includes social work and teaching. Leaders and managers readily work in partnership with local authorities. A professional stated, 'The agency is approachable and open to exploring the best ways to support foster carers and children.'

The agency makes a positive contribution to the fostering sector and its local community. The registered manager and a supervising social worker have delivered training to another fostering agency. The agency also supports a food programme for the borough's homeless community.

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 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 (a))</p>	1 September 2021
<p>The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information, and support as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))</p>	1 October 2021
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them—</p> <p>receive appropriate training and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))</p>	1 October 2021
<p>If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1))</p> <p>In particular, notify Ofsted of the outcome of a child protection enquiry.</p>	1 October 2021
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</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.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster</p>	1 October 2021

parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(b) (2) (3))	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. In particular, risk assessments and safer care plans should fully detail the management of children's health risks. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 4.5)
- The registered person should ensure that staff and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files. There should be a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and action should be taken when needed. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 26.2)
- The registered person should ensure that management of the service makes sure that all staff's work and all fostering activity are consistent with the 2011 regulations, national minimum standards and with the service's policies and procedures. ('Fostering services: National minimum standards', 25.3)

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: SC057262

Registered provider: Children of Colour Limited

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Inspector

Sharon Payne, Social Care Inspector

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