

# Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

185 Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8JY

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency offers short-term, long-term, emergency, and parent and child placements. It currently has 20 fostering households and 29 children living with foster carers.

There has been no registered manager in post since 23 November 2020.

**Inspection date:** 8 September 2021

**Date of previous inspection:** 7 June 2021

## This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken following a judgement of inadequate at the last full inspection which was undertaken from 8 to 11 June 2021. The purpose of this visit was to monitor how the agency had progressed in relation to addressing the serious and widespread concerns identified at the last full inspection.

Several of the requirements made at the last inspection remain unmet. This is because the agency's plan to address the shortfalls have not yet been implemented or have not been in place long enough to show that changes have resulted in improvements. Despite this, the agency has made progress. There are credible plans in place to address key concerns such as the leadership and management capacity to oversee the quality of care, the quality of support to foster carers provided by the agency social workers, and improved systems to safeguard children.

The agency has employed a suitably experienced part-time manager and is in the process of recruiting a full-time manager. Suitably qualified supervising social workers have also been recruited. This has led to some improvements in the oversight of the agency's practice and the supervision and support to supervising social workers. The continuing absence of a full-time registered manager has reduced the amount of progress achieved in meeting the requirements made from the last inspection. Therefore, the requirement relating to the agency having sufficient and suitably qualified staff remains unmet.

Despite improvements in the management oversight of practice, the most recent manager's report on the quality of care lacked sufficient detail and evaluation. It did not consider feedback from key stakeholders such as children, social workers or foster carers. Nor does the monitoring process capture all relevant areas of the agency's practice. For example, there is no mechanism to monitor the medicines given to children. This means that leaders cannot be certain that children are receiving medicines as prescribed. The report is not used as an effective tool for continuous improvement.

The agency has addressed the incomplete standards of care investigations that had been identified at the last inspection. Leaders now take prompt action to investigate and address any concerns relating to foster carers' care practice. Safeguarding concerns are clearly recorded, effectively monitored and child protection concerns are appropriately investigated in partnership with the relevant statutory agencies. The requirement relating to implementing effective safeguarding policies is now met. However, when a child made an allegation against a foster carer the provider failed to notify Ofsted, as required by regulations. This compromises the regulator's ability to oversee and monitor the agency's safeguarding practice.

There have been no reported incidents of foster carers using physical interventions. Behaviour management plans have been updated to clarify the circumstances in which restraint may be used. The requirement relating to the agency's physical interventions policy is now met.

Training records now show that the majority of foster carers have completed core training. There is further training planned in key areas such as behaviour management. Most foster carers have not completed training about promoting equality and diversity. The previous requirement regarding meeting foster carers' training needs, therefore, remains unmet.

Concerns that were raised at the previous inspection about how a child was being supported to understand her cultural identity continue. The requirement related to this shortfall remains unmet.

The agency has employed a person to undertake direct work with children to help them and to advocate for them to ensure that their views and feelings are understood. This is a positive step, although this role is not yet clearly defined, and it is not yet clear what difference this work will make to children. The agency has plans to improve the level of involvement of children in decisions about their care, but these have not been implemented. There are currently no systems in place to support children to access their records.

There has been limited activity by the agency fostering panel, and the requirements relating to the effectiveness of the panel were not tested at this inspection. These will remain in place. Similarly, no foster carer annual reviews have been undertaken since the last inspection, so the quality of this work was untested at this inspection.

All annual reviews for foster carers remain within timescales. The agency has recruited new panel members and they now have access to a suitable range of expertise and experience. A suitably experienced panel chair and vice chair have been appointed. The agency has credible plans to improve the effectiveness of the panel but, at the time of this inspection, these plans have not yet been carried out. For example, annual appraisals for panel members have not been undertaken.

Feedback from placing social workers regarding the quality of support provided to foster carers was consistently positive. One supervising social worker had been particularly effective in advocating for children to ensure that suitable education provision is made. Foster carers were also positive about the current levels of support they are receiving. Monthly supervision visits are taking place. Children are seen and consulted with as part of supervising social workers' visits.

Morale amongst the staff is much improved since the last inspection. There have been no complaints recorded by the agency. As a result, agency practice in this area was not tested at this inspection and the previous requirement relating to agency response to complaints will remain in place.

No more children have come to live with foster carers since the last inspection. Therefore, agency practice regarding matching children with suitable carers was not tested. Some children move within the agency to receive respite care, but there is no formal record of how these arrangements include matching decisions. This approach runs the risk that respite placements will not meet children's needs. It also demonstrates a lack of care and attention to important decisions that can affect the quality of care and the experience of children who may need respite care.

New staff are subject to checks to make sure that they are of suitable character for the role. However, the agency does not consistently verify references in order to be reassured that these are genuine and accurate. This removes an important level of scrutiny to be reassured of the employee's conduct and level of competence, and to verify their reasons for leaving their previous employment.

## 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        |
|--|-----------------|
| 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))  | 6 December 2021 |
| <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, having regard to—</p> <p>the size of the fostering service, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by it, and</p> <p>the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 19 (a)(b))</p>   | 6 December 2021 |
| <p>The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to—</p> <p>the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and</p> <p>the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency,</p> <p>carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to the absence of a full-time, permanent registered manager.</p> | 6 December 2021 |

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| <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, and</p> <p>before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child's—</p> <p>wishes and feelings (having regard to the child's age and understanding), and</p> <p>religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. (Regulation 11 (a)(b)(i)(ii))</p> <p>This is with specific reference to the agency's matching practice and supporting a child's identity.</p>   | <p>6 December 2021</p> |
| <p>The fostering service provider must not—</p> <p>employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or</p> <p>allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service.</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—</p> <p>is of integrity and good character,</p> <p>has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c))</p> | <p>6 December 2021</p> |

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| In particular, ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to verify references to establish why an applicant's previous employment ended. (Schedule 1(4))   |                 |
| <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them—</p> <p>receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the agency's panel members.</p>   | 6 December 2021 |
| <p>The registered provider must appoint an individual to manage the fostering agency.</p> <p>Where the registered provider is—</p> <p>an organisation, it must not appoint the person who is the responsible individual as the manager,</p> <p>a partnership, it must not appoint any of the partners as the manager.</p> <p>The registered provider must notify the Chief Inspector without delay of—</p> <p>the name of any person appointed in accordance with this regulation, and</p> <p>the date on which the appointment is to take effect. (Regulation 6 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b))</p> | 6 December 2021 |
| The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))   | 6 December 2021 |
| <p>The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation.</p> <p>The registered person must ensure that—</p> <p>children are enabled to make a complaint or representation. (Regulation 18 (4) (5)(a))</p>   | 6 December 2021 |

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| <p>The fostering service provider must obtain such information as the fostering panel considers necessary and send that information to the panel, and provide such other assistance as the fostering panel may request, so far as is reasonably practicable.</p> <p>The fostering panel must also—</p> <p>advise, where appropriate, on the procedures under which reviews in accordance with regulation 28 are carried out by the fostering service provider, and periodically monitor their effectiveness,</p> <p>oversee the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider, and</p> <p>give advice, and make recommendations, on such other matters or cases as the fostering service provider may refer to it.</p> <p>In this regulation “recommend” means recommend to the fostering service provider. (Regulation 25 (3) (4)(a)(b)(c) (5))</p> | <p>6 December 2021</p> |
| <p>The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation.</p> <p>A review must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider consider it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year.</p> <p>When undertaking a review, the fostering service provider must—</p> <p>make such enquiries and obtain such information as they consider necessary in order to review whether the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent’s household continues to be suitable, and</p> <p>seek and take into account the views of—</p> <p>the foster parent,</p> <p>any child placed with the foster parent (subject to the child’s age and understanding), and</p>   | <p>6 December 2021</p> |

any placing authority which has, within the preceding year, placed a child with the foster parent.

At the conclusion of the review, the fostering service provider must prepare a written report, setting out whether—

the foster parent continues to be suitable to be a foster parent and the foster parent's household continues to be suitable, and

the terms of the foster parent's approval continue to be appropriate.

The fostering service provider must on the occasion of the first review under this regulation, and may on any subsequent review, refer their report to the fostering panel for consideration.

If the fostering service provider decide, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, that the foster parent and the foster parent's household continue to be suitable and that the terms of the foster parent's approval continue to be appropriate, they must give written notice to the foster parent of their decision.

If, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, the fostering service provider are no longer satisfied that the foster parent or the foster parent's household continue to be suitable, or that the terms of the approval are appropriate, they must (subject to paragraph (8))—

give written notice to the foster parent that they propose to terminate, or (as the case may be) revise the terms of, the foster parent's approval (a "qualifying determination"), together with their reasons and a copy of any recommendation made by the fostering panel, and

advise the foster parent that, within 28 days of the date of the qualifying determination, the foster parent may—

submit any written representations that the foster parent wishes to make to the fostering service provider, or

apply to the Secretary of State for a review by an independent review panel of the qualifying determination.



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| (Regulation 28 (1) (2) (3)(a)(b)(i)(ii)(iii) (4)(a)(b) (5) (6) (7)(a)(b)(i)(ii))   |                 |
| <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>The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster 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)(a)(b)(2)(3))</p> | 6 December 2021 |

## Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 26.6)

## Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **Independent fostering agency details**

**Unique reference number:** SC376060

**Registered provider:** Pilgrims Corner Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** 185 Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 8JY

**Responsible individual:** Sarah Norman

**Registered manager:** Post vacant

## **Inspectors**

Lee Kirwin, Regulatory Inspection Manager

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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