

# Integrated Fostering Services Ltd

Unit 3, Pavilion Business Centre, 1st Floor, 6 Kinetic Crescent, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 7FJ

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned independent fostering agency based in Enfield. The service aims to provide the following types of foster care placements: short-term, bridging, respite, emergency, and solo and sibling placements. Additionally, the service aims to provide foster care placements for parent and child and asylum-seeking children.

The current manager has been registered with Ofsted since 11 May 2018 and completed the required management course in December 2018.

**Inspection date:** 9 September 2021

**Date of previous inspection:** 22 January 2018

## This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was triggered by a complaint and a safeguarding notification received by Ofsted. In addition, this visit has reviewed the progress made by the independent fostering agency since the last inspection in January 2018.

The key concerns were that:

- Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are not renewed in a timely manner for all members of one fostering family, or their friends and relatives who regularly stay overnight in the foster home
- Form F assessments do not include key people such as the foster carer's partner
- there is an allegation that a support worker has driven a car with a member of staff and child onboard without a full driving licence or suitable insurance.

The key findings from this visit against the reported concerns found that:

- the fostering agency has experienced delays in obtaining DBS checks when they have been applied for, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic
- DBS checks are requested for back-up carers, support carers and those family members who stay overnight at the foster carer's home
- records confirmed that assessments of back-up carers, support workers and family members are completed
- the operations director and registered manager confirmed that checks are completed for staff to ensure that they hold a full driving licence and relevant car insurance.

This monitoring visit took place at the fostering agency office.

During the visit, the registered manager and operations director were interviewed. A sample of foster carers, support carers, back-up carers and family member records were reviewed. In addition, management meeting minutes, the training matrix and various other monitoring systems were reviewed, and inspectors spoke to two placing authorities and one designated officer.

The agency completes renewal DBS checks on existing carers. However, delays with the DBS service have meant that checks have not been returned to the fostering agency in a timely manner.

The operations director reported that they have escalated their concerns to the DBS regarding this delay. The registered manager and operations director provided email records that confirmed this. They also provided evidence of effective management oversight of these checks.

The operations director and registered manager confirmed that driving licences and insurance documents for staff who transport children are routinely checked. Records show that driving licences and suitable insurance are requested and records are retained by the agency.

However, although these records are held, an allegation that a support worker had driven a member of staff and one child without holding a full driving licence or suitable insurance remains in question. The matter was reported by the agency appropriately and is currently being considered by the designated officer. The agency is not using this support worker while all investigations are carried out.

One shortfall has been identified during this visit. This is in relation to the employment of support workers.

Family members of existing foster carers have been working as support workers across the agency. Although they do have valid DBS checks and have been assessed as support carers to their foster families, they are working as employees and hence should be subject to safe recruitment processes as set out by the regulations. The

agency is aware of this shortfall and has started to ensure that the necessary employment checks are completed on all staff working with children. There are approximately 10 support work staff who fall into this category. The failure to carry out a full recruitment process compromises the agency's safeguarding procedures.

The agency holds monthly management meetings that monitor the work of the agency. Minutes of management meetings show a clear process for monitoring and oversight of all the work of the agency. Regular monitoring reports are sent to the regulator, which oversees the quality of care provided by the agency.

The four requirements and three recommendations made at the last full inspection in 2018 were reviewed as part of this visit and have been met in full. The requirements related to the children's guide, the qualifications of the registered manager, the suitability of staff and the quality of training provided to foster carers. The recommendations related to safe care plans, foster care reviews and staying put training. All these requirements and recommendations were met by December 2018, which shows the agency's ability to respond and improve its practice.

## 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—</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.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that any person working for a fostering service who is not employed by the fostering service, and to whom paragraph (2) does not apply, is appropriately supervised while carrying out their duties.</p> <p>(Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c) (4))</p>	31 December 2021

<p>This specifically relates to the employment of support workers who work across the agency, to ensure that full and satisfactory information is available.</p>	
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## Information about this inspection

This monitoring visit was triggered by a complaint and a safeguarding notification received by Ofsted. In addition, this visit monitored 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:** SC400955

**Registered provider:** Integrated Fostering Services Ltd

**Registered provider address:** Unit 3 Pavilions Business Centre, 6 Kinetic Crescent, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 7FJ

**Responsible individual:** Sarah Ferguson

## Inspector

Christine Kennet, Social Care Inspector

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