

# Footprints Foster Care Ltd

Footprints Foster Care Ltd

Unit 5 and 6 Longham Business Park, 168 Ringwood Road, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9BU

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a private company which is owned and managed by the responsible individual and the registered manager. The agency registered with Ofsted in March 2012.

The agency currently has 22 fostering households and 34 children in placement. The agency recruits and assesses its foster carers and provides standard, emergency, respite, short-term, long-term and permanent placements for children as well as parent and child placements.

The manager has been registered since March 2012.

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: 20 to 24 September 2021

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 19 March 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children benefit from being cared for and nurtured by child-centred foster carers who are carefully recruited, assessed and prepared by the agency. The foster carers build trusting relationships with children, many of which last long after the child has grown up and left their care. Children who contributed to the inspection spoke positively of the care they receive and the enjoyable activities that take place.

Children are making good progress with their education, physical and emotional healthcare needs, and social skills from their starting points. Individual outcomes for children are well known to the supervising social worker and foster carer. However, there is not currently a centralised outcome tracker that gives an overview to managers of what progress children are making in all areas of their lives and how this compares with their peers.

A strength of the agency is the quality of the parent and child placements. Placement planning meetings take place in a timely manner, and these clearly set out the aims and expectations of the placement. Supervising social workers provide higher levels of supervision and support to parent and child foster carers. Outcomes for children within the parent and child placement are excellent. Most children move home and remain living with their parent.

The agency's ethos of therapeutic parenting is an approach that all staff and carers believe in and promote. An experienced and well-qualified psychologist supports the agency to further develop this ethos and is involved with supporting staff in the areas of assessment, support and training.

Records capture the lived experiences of the children. However, some could benefit from being written in a more child-friendly style.

Foster carers report that they feel very well supported, supervised and trained. This is a strength of the agency. Supervising social workers say that they have a manageable number of foster carers to support and so they know the carers and their families very well. This helps them to achieve permanency for children and avoid unplanned endings where possible.

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

The agency has a no physical restraint approach when supporting children. Since the previous inspection, there have been no incidents of physical intervention. Records capture the skilled approaches applied by foster carers when supporting children's behaviours. In addition, the agency has appointed a family support worker who provides much-valued additional support for carers and children.

Children rarely go missing from care. On the very few occasions a child has been reported missing, they are quickly returned and helped by their foster carers to

understand how to keep themselves safe. However, the inspectors found that, on one occasion, the manager was not able to evidence that the child had received a return home interview following an incident when they had been missing from care.

Safer care plans and risk assessments are in place for children. Nevertheless, inspectors found that one risk assessment was not sufficiently robust as it lacked strategies to help the foster carer to manage self-injurious behaviours.

When incidents occur, they are investigated appropriately and advice is sought from the designated officer. The inspectors found that not all notifiable incidents have been reported to Ofsted, and recommended learning actions from a standards of care investigation have not been followed for one carer. This resulted in them not completing appropriate training in a timely manner. These oversights did not impact on the safe care of children.

Unannounced visits take place at least once a year. Recordings of these visits are detailed and demonstrate that the children are living in safe and secure homes.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The manager and the responsible individual are extremely visible in the agency and are child-focused. Their ethos of providing children with the best care possible clearly comes across. Staff enjoy working for the agency and told the inspectors that they feel valued and supported.

The registered manager understands the agency's strengths and weaknesses. While monthly monitoring analysis takes place by the manager, a stronger auditing system and monitoring process would have highlighted some of the shortfalls identified during the inspection process. For example, the inspectors found examples of where recording lacks information or there is a variable quality in documentation, the electronic recording system is disorganised in some parts, and there is no efficient way to track the progress and outcomes of the children.

All staff have regular team meetings, supervision and training opportunities. Managers and staff are committed to ensuring that they and foster carers receive regular training as part of the overall programme. Foster carers are supported to complete their training and development workbooks within their first year and completion is in line with national figures. However, not all discussions between the foster carers and supervising social workers are captured, and it is unclear how consultation and feedback from the foster carers, supervising social workers and children informs the ongoing development of the agency.

The fostering panel functions effectively, is safe, and provides support and challenge appropriately. The panel chairperson is experienced in the field of children's social care and child protection and raises practice issues when appropriate to help the agency to improve. The agency decision-maker is the manager and she provides an

appropriate level of scrutiny and challenge. Together with the supervising social workers, there are good examples of challenging agencies or professionals to support children.

# 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))	26 November 2021

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that entries in records, decisions and reasons for them are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', paragraph 26.5, page 52)
- 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 should be 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', paragraph 26.6, page 52)
- The registered person should ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service. The manager should ensure compliance with the service's policies and identify any concerns about specific incidents, including any patterns or trends. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', paragraph 25.2, page 50)

## 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:** SC442553

**Registered provider:** Footprints Foster Care Ltd

**Registered provider address:** 7 Cox Avenue, Bournemouth BH9 3LY

**Responsible individual:** Vanda Leigh

**Registered manager:** Stephanie Omosevwerha

**Telephone number:** 01202 573408

**Email address:** [enquiries@footprintsfostercare.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@footprintsfostercare.co.uk)

## **Inspectors**

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

Penelope Kutz, Social Care Inspector

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