

# Xcel 2000 Fostercare Services

Xcel 2000 Fostercare Services Limited

Xcel 2000, 8 London Road, SITTINGBOURNE, Kent, ME10 1NA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in November 2003. The manager registered with Ofsted on 27 October 2020.

Foster carers provide long-term respite and permanent care placements. The fostering service also provides placements for children on remand, as well as parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 44 approved fostering households providing care for a total of 59 children.

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: 27 September to 1 October 2021

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of last inspection:** 15 May 2017

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** not applicable

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are looked after by foster carers who are caring, encouraging and compassionate. The rigorous recruitment, training and assessment of foster carers means that standards of care given to children are high. Care is individualised and carers are supported by their supervising social workers to ensure that they have an in-depth knowledge of the needs of any child that they care for. Because of this, children experience consistently positive outcomes.

Children experience a coming together of services that results in a tailored approach to their care. Children are at the centre of all the work that they do, and foster carers are instrumental in the results. The commitment and diligence of foster carers has meant that children with substantial health needs have made significant progress. A particular strength of the agency is the education and safeguarding specialist who provides strong advocacy for children's education while building caring and trusting relationships with otherwise disengaged children.

Children are well matched to their foster carers and the rigorous process of matching means that any identified gaps are addressed with additional training for the carer. For example, one carer was provided with training around tube feeding and another around foetal alcohol syndrome. Carers confidently build relationships with health and education professionals to ensure the children who they care for receive the best possible all-round care.

Children's views and wishes are well known. There are several ways that these are learned: from children's councils and forums to participation activities that create opportunities to talk to staff and carers in a relaxed way. There is a clear ethos of listening to children and ensuring that they know their rights. The agency's children's guide is produced in several languages and within this is how to complain. Children are involved in the interview process of new staff, which helps them to feel engaged with the agency and their views valued.

Foster carers work closely with the agency to ensure that children who live some distance from their home, whether this is in another country or not, experience care and support that meet their continuing needs. Foster carers are meticulous in learning about a child's background and culture and provide a range of opportunities for the child to maintain and keep this alive, while also teaching them about life in the UK. One child said that his carers teaching him English was one of the best things about living with them and that 'they feel like family'.

Children are well prepared for their futures. The agency provides training to children around areas relevant to living safe and productive lives, ranging from fire safety and first aid to internet safety and keeping safe online, delivered one-to-one by the education specialist. Preparation for children moving on to independence is thorough

and the child's voice is heard throughout the extensive planning, which enables them to feel involved and in control of their future.

The fostering panel is provided with documentation and thorough assessments of prospective carers. Preparation of these carers is systematic, and their suitability is well known before presentation to the panel. The agency decision-maker is experienced in undertaking this role and can challenge the agency effectively where needed. This means that only well-prepared, safe and suitable carers are approved to provide care to children.

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

Children's needs are well understood by supervising social workers and foster carers. They are proficient in identifying risks which are mitigated through detailed risk assessments and safety plans. The involvement of children in this process means that they become increasingly safe. One child said that he feels safe with his carers who skilfully reassured him when he feared being taken away. Carers receive comprehensive training around risk management, and additional training is always available to help boost their skills and knowledge.

Supervising social workers work closely with foster carers to respond to children who may go missing or who are at risk of harm. Carers receive extensive training around this and as a result are well prepared for managing such incidents. The education and safeguarding specialist is instrumental in supporting foster carers regarding children who go missing. Where placing authorities do not provide talks with the child when they return home, the education and safeguarding specialist confidently and effectively provides these, building good relationships with the child where she could challenge and educate them from a basis of trust.

Foster carers are well prepared for managing behaviours and complex situations. They receive regular training specific to de-escalation and use their skills and knowledge in this area effectively. Foster carers receive high-quality, regular and consistent supervision sessions that are reflective, allowing space to discuss how the child's behaviours might have had an impact on a family and how clear boundaries make a difference to the child. Detailed safe care plans also help foster carers to implement clear boundaries that benefit all in the household and lead to a feeling of well-being and security for the children.

Supervising social workers, foster carers and the wider professional network work collaboratively to ensure effective planning for children that minimises risks. Safety plans are devised at the outset of a child being placed with foster carers, and in one placement this included an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats leading to a significant reduction in the risks the child was subject to. The success of this placement was further enhanced by the involvement of the child in the safety planning. Foster carers promote contact with family and those important to the child. However, in a parent-and-child placement, a clear written agreement around contact with the other parent was not in place.

The supervising social workers and the education and safeguarding specialist work as a team to provide intensive and effective support to foster carers and children. They receive high-quality safeguarding training which means that they are kept up to date with developments in this area. Staff show a highly developed knowledge of safeguarding practice and confidently work with external professionals to improve fostering placements for children.

The agency follows safer recruitment practices. This means that unsafe people do not work with children in the agency. Children are involved in the interview process and devise questions about things that are most important to them.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The agency is managed by a highly effective registered manager who is ambitious in her vision for children and has high expectations for what children can achieve. She monitors the progress of children closely and makes positive comments on children's files. She writes in a way modelled to staff and carers and that will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future.

Leaders and managers preside over a culture of celebrating achievement, no matter how small. This has led to children proudly and confidently sharing their results and planning for their future careers.

Leaders and managers ensure a high standard of care in all areas of the agency. The fostering panel is varied and diverse with a care-experienced chair who has been nurtured into the role. The panel promotes safe, secure and stable fostering placements that meet the needs of children, no matter how complex. Recommendations are well considered, and the agency decision-maker challenges the panel where required.

Leaders and managers provided excellent support to foster carers and children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and their feedback during this inspection was extremely positive without exception. For example, leaders and managers prioritised the needs of children by taking round activities that they could engage in. Leaders and managers are visible from the start of the recruitment process; carers then feel able to welcome them into their homes.

The staff team shares very positive feedback about the support it receives from the management team with no exception. Staff receive regular supervision that is reflective. Staff feel valued and, as a result, are fully engaged with the agency and confident to make suggestions for change. Supervising social workers are provided with a comprehensive training programme that meets the needs of children while also focusing on individual needs, such as writing foster carer assessments or supervising foster carers.

Leaders and managers have good oversight of the agency, resulting in their knowledge and understanding of the agency's strengths and areas for development.

They responded quickly and effectively to staff and carer performance issues while also keeping them engaged in the process.

Leaders and managers work diligently to develop strong professional relationships to ensure the best possible all-round support to children. They have created a work environment where safeguarding professionals deliver workshops that update staff and carers on developments in this area. They confidently challenge when the responses from other services are not effective and do not have the child at the centre of the work being done.

Leaders and managers have created a culture of aspiration and positivity and have high expectations of their staff to change and improve the lives of the children they are responsible for. They recruit well-skilled and experienced workers while also developing newly qualified staff.

## **What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendation**

- The registered person should support foster carers to play an active role in agreeing the contents of each child's placement plan, in conjunction with the responsible authority. This is with specific reference to ensuring that a written agreement is in place confirming contact arrangements and process for any changes. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 31.1)

### **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:** SC036488

**Registered provider:** Xcel 2000 FosterCare Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** Quayside House, Chatham Maritime, Chatham ME4 4QZ

**Responsible individual:** Tracey Sullivan

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## **Inspectors**

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector  
Suzy Lemmy, Social Care Inspector

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