

Flowers Fostering Limited

Ability House, 121 Brooker Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1JH

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This fostering agency registered with Ofsted in December 2019. The privately owned agency provides long-term, short-term, emergency and parent-and-child placements. At the time of this visit, the agency had four fostering households and was providing foster placements for two children.

The registered manager's position has been vacant since 20 July 2020. A new manager took up post on 1 June 2021 and has applied to Ofsted to register.

Inspection date: 16 November 2021

Date of previous inspection: 16 August 2021

This monitoring visit

This visit took place to monitor the progress that the provider has made towards meeting the requirements that were raised at the full inspection in August 2021.

The agency has been without a registered manager for over a year. The new acting manager has applied for registration. At the time of this visit, the agency had four approved fostering households, of which one was actively fostering two children.

Since the last inspection, the manager has reviewed some of the staff recruitment files. The manager has now ensured that suitable references are held for social work staff and that these staff have the appropriate licence to practise. However, recruitment files for agency panel members remain poor. Insufficient attempts have been made to obtain the required written references or to evidence qualifications. The agency, therefore, has not assured itself of panel members' suitability.

The last inspection identified that the records of health and safety checks for fostering households were poor quality with missing information. These health and safety checks have not been reviewed and updated.

Children's individual safer care assessments have been developed since the last inspection. The assessments outline the general needs of the children, but do not always include the specific known risks. The assessments do not review the relationships between foster children living in the household. This means that any risks, and the actions to reduce them, are not clearly documented.

Staff were unable to locate the household safer care policies during this inspection. It was, therefore, not possible to review whether previously identified shortfalls have been addressed.

The manager has clear plans for the training of carers in areas such as first aid and preventing radicalisation. Some training has taken place for one carer regarding the role of a foster carer. However, much of the planned training, including safeguarding roles and responsibilities, has yet to take place and carers have not yet received suitably targeted training to ensure that they are best equipped to meet the individual needs of the children who live with them.

The shortfalls in recruitment, health and safety checks, risk assessments and training have the potential to undermine the safety and well-being of children.

The manager has clear expectations of the quality of assessment of prospective carers and the suitability checks that should be made to ensure good matching. Applications that were in progress at the time of the last inspection that indicated applicants were not suitable have been returned to panel to end the assessment process. It is not possible to evaluate improvements in the approval of carers or placement of children as the agency has not placed any children or approved new carers since the last inspection. The manager has reviewed carers' parenting capacity and updated the carers' terms of approval to ensure that they match with the number of children living with the carer.

The agency's statement of purpose has been updated and is now available on the agency's website. This has improved the accessibility of information about the agency.

There is still not an effective strategy for maintaining and storing records. Consequently, during the inspection, the manager and staff were not always able to access accurate and current information. Important documents such as foster carer agreements and supervision records are not consistently signed by the carer and some documentation could not be located.

Panel processes and foster carers' personal development plans were not reviewed as part of this inspection. Therefore, recommendations and requirements set in relation to these areas are restated.

The new manager is aware of areas for improvement at the agency and has begun to improve aspects of the service. However, this has not begun in all areas, and actions that have been taken have yet to be embedded.

Since the last inspection, the manager has focused on rebuilding the staff team and ensuring that the staff and carers feel supported. However, the manager has not maintained sufficient oversight and has been overly optimistic about the completion of some tasks. As a result, most requirements have been restated as they are not yet fully met or because they were not reviewed as part of this inspection. The recommendations from the last inspection are restated as they were not reviewed as part of this monitoring visit. They will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 ensure that the fostering service is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation 3 (5))</p> <p>In particular, the provider should ensure consistent and appropriate management arrangements, monitoring and oversight.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	27 December 2021
<p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and</p> <p>sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, the provider should ensure that all agency staff and foster carers understand their responsibilities and the processes that they should follow.</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	27 December 2021
<p>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))</p> <p>In particular, the provider should ensure that foster carers receive training in preventing radicalisation, first aid, and targeted training specifically relevant to the identified needs of children placed with them.</p>	27 December 2021

<p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</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.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless 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)(3))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>27 December 2021</p>
<p>Where a person ("X") applies to become a foster parent and the fostering service provider decide to assess X's suitability to become a foster parent, any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation.</p> <p>The fostering service provider may carry out an assessment of any person who applies to become a foster parent and whom they consider may be suitable to become a foster parent ("X"), and any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation.</p> <p>Subject to paragraph (1B), the fostering service provider—</p> <p>must, as soon as reasonably practicable, obtain the information specified in Part 1 of Schedule 3 relating to X and other members of X's household and family,</p> <p>Subject to paragraphs (2A) and (3), where the fostering service provider have obtained all the information set out in paragraph (1A) and have not given the notification in paragraph (1B), the fostering service provider must—</p> <p>prepare a written report on X which includes the following matters—</p> <p>the information required by Schedule 3 and any other information the fostering service provider consider relevant,</p>	<p>27 December 2021</p>

<p>the fostering service provider's assessment of X's suitability to be a foster parent, and</p> <p>the fostering service provider's proposals about any terms of approval, and</p> <p>notify X that the case is to be referred to the fostering panel, and give X a copy of the report prepared under subparagraph (c) inviting X to send any observations in writing to the fostering service provider within 10 working days beginning with the date on which the notification is sent.</p> <p>Having regard to the information obtained under paragraph (2), the fostering service provider must—</p> <p>prepare a written report on X which includes the matters set out in paragraph (4).</p> <p>The report referred to in paragraph (3) must include the following matters in relation to X—</p> <p>the information required by Schedule 3 and any other information the fostering service provider consider relevant. (Regulation 26 (1)(A)(a) (2)(c)(i)(ii)(iii)(d))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	
<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 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) (3))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>27 December 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are supported to ensure that their homes are free of avoidable hazards, in keeping with family life. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4', paragraph 3.82)
- The registered person should ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. In particular, ensure that the potential risks to children are assessed and preventative measures are identified. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 4.5)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are aware of, and do not exceed, the measures that they can take to prevent a child leaving without permission under current legislation and government guidance. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 5.3)
- The registered person should ensure that written records kept by the fostering service when a child goes missing detail action taken by foster carers, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the foster home and any action taken in the light of those reasons. This information should be shared with the responsible authority and, when appropriate, the child's parents. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 5.10)
- The registered person should ensure that, unless an emergency placement makes it impossible, children are given information about the foster carer before arrival, and any information (including, when appropriate, photographic information) that they need or reasonably request about the placement, in a format appropriate to their age and understanding. Whenever possible, children should be able to visit the foster carer's home and talk with the foster carers in private prior to a placement decision being made. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 11.3)
- The registered person should ensure that all necessary information is provided to panel members at least five working days in advance of the panel meeting to enable full and proper consideration. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 14.3)
- The panel chair should ensure that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the main issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 14.7)
- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service provider's decision-maker makes a considered decision that takes account of all the information available to them, including the recommendation of the fostering panel and, when applicable, the independent review panel, within seven working days of receipt of the recommendation and final set of panel minutes. In particular, ensure that panel minutes are sent to the agency

decision maker swiftly to allow them to make timely decisions. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 14.9)

- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. When gaps are identified, the fostering service should work with the responsible authority to ensure that the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are able to evidence that the Training, Support and Development Standards have been attained within 12 months of approval (or within 18 months for family and friends foster carers). Fostering households may use the same evidence workbook. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 20.3)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 20.4)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 21.8)
- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service's decision-maker is a senior person within the fostering service, or is a trustee or director of the fostering service, who is a social worker with at least three years' post-qualifying experience in childcare social work and has knowledge of childcare law and practice. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 23.12)
- The registered person should ensure that staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There should be a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 26.2)

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: 2551006

Registered provider: Flowers Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: AW House, 6-8 Stuart Street, Luton, Bedfordshire
LU1 2SJ

Responsible individual: Umer Ahmed

Registered manager: Post vacant

Inspector

Joanna Heller, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2021