

Fostering Matters Ltd

Fostering Matters Limited

10 College Green, Gloucester GL1 2LX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Fostering Matters is a small, privately owned independent fostering agency. This agency provides a range of fostering services, including the placement of sibling groups and parent and child arrangements. There are currently 52 children placed and 39 approved foster carer households.

A manager is in post and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 21 April 2021 to carry out a monitoring visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 1 to 5 November 2021

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers requires improvement to be good

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 5 March 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection:

A monitoring visit took place on 21 April 2021 to review two compliance notices. The notices were served following shortfalls identified by the inspector at the assurance visit on 5 March 2021. The concerns were in respect of leadership and management and safeguarding.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children benefit from being cared for and loved by child-centred foster carers who are safely recruited, assessed and supported by the agency.

The foster carers build trusting relationships with children. Children who are identified as unaccompanied asylum seekers do very well with their foster carers. Progress for these children is excellent, and many remain living with their foster carers after they reach the age of 18.

Children make good progress in all areas as a direct result of the time and effort given by the foster carers and supervising social workers. While it is apparent that outcomes for children placed are good, the agency would benefit from developing its strategic analysis of children's outcomes in a more formal way.

Children who contributed to the inspection spoke positively of the care they receive and the enjoyable activities that take place. One child told the inspectors that the agency was 'amazing' and 'they are the best'.

Foster carers and professionals speak highly of the agency. The views of foster carers, children and professionals are captured and considered. However, managers and leaders are aware that further work is required to promote consultation and participation in the continued development of the agency.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the monitoring visit in April 2021, reporting mechanisms have improved and there is evidence of information being shared promptly with professionals and other agencies. The inspectors noted that a strategy to support two children in respect of a potential risk could benefit from being captured in a standalone document. This was discussed with the manager during the inspection.

Children living with foster carers are kept safe because the supervising social workers and foster carers understand the children's safeguarding needs. However, inspectors found that safer care plans for young people over the age of 18 years failed to acknowledge the difference in risks between children and adults.

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

Foster carers and supervising social workers receive a range of training, both face-to-face and via an online training package. However, some foster carers and supervising social workers have failed to keep up to date with some mandatory training, and there is no training specific to those carers who support adults.

Nonetheless, foster carers spoken with demonstrated a sound knowledge around supporting children.

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

Since the assurance visit in March 2021 and the subsequent monitoring visit in April 2021, the agency has undergone both a challenging period and a period of reflection and development.

A new manager has been appointed and is in the process of registering with Ofsted. She has a wealth of knowledge and demonstrates passion and dedication to the development of the agency. For example, she has already modified systems to review, record and monitor the quality of care, leading to better data collection. Nevertheless, leaders and managers recognise that further work is necessary to embed these systems, which will in turn reduce and prevent recording errors and improve the overall monitoring of the agency.

Except for a change in manager, the staff team has remained relatively stable for several years. The team retains a 'family approach' that foster carers speak warmly about. Foster carers told inspectors that their supervising social workers were 'amazing' and the new manager is 'like a breath of fresh air'.

Supervising social workers regularly receive good-quality supervision. This has ensured that the team has felt supported and well led during a period of change that has included the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, the agency is meeting its aims and objectives. However, further work is required to ensure better participation by the children and carers in the improvement and development of the agency and to develop a more effective method of capturing the outcomes of children. This is reflected in one requirement and two recommendations being made.

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 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>This relates to the manager ensuring that all foster carers complete all mandatory training.</p>	7 January 2022

Recommendations

- The fostering service must ensure that all foster carers who support young people who are over the age of 18 years receive appropriate training in relation to adult safeguarding, and that arrangements are consistent with the young person's safer care plan. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 25, paragraph 12.3)
- The manager must have an effective system in place to ensure that all records kept by the service comply with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends, and to track the outcomes of children effectively. Ensure that immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 50, paragraph 25.2)

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: SC061740

Registered provider: Fostering Matters Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 7, Malvern View Business Park, Stella Way,
Bishops Cleeve, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 7DQ

Responsible individual: Michael Castledine

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 01452 309210

Email address: contactus@fosteringmatters.com

Inspectors

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector
Polly Soper, Social Care Inspector

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