

# Apex Fostering Limited

Brickfield House, High Road, Thornwood, Epping CM16 6TH  
Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## **Information about this independent fostering agency**

This privately owned independent fostering agency provides a wide range of placements, including parent and child.

At the time of this visit, the agency had nine fostering households and 13 children placed with foster carers.

The registered manager has been in post since the fostering provider registered with Ofsted in July 2021.

**Inspection date: 30 November 2021**

**Date of previous inspection:** not applicable

## **This monitoring visit**

This monitoring visit was undertaken to ensure that adequate management support and oversight are in place at the agency.

There is a responsible individual and a full-time registered manager overseeing the operation of the agency. The agency employed a full-time supervising social worker in November 2021, who is contributing to the supervision and support of nine fostering households.

Foster carers are wholly positive about the support that they receive from managers and the supervising social worker. Carers receive regular supervision from a qualified social worker and benefit from additional 'keeping in touch' communication with the agency.

Foster carers said that managers are accessible and responsive, including when contacted outside of usual office hours. When needed, managers appoint a peer mentor who can offer guidance, empathy and support to foster carers. Managers

recently organised a Christmas event that was well attended and appreciated by foster carers and their families.

The managers identify foster carers' training needs and arrange relevant consultation with professionals. Foster carers gave examples of training that they have asked for and which has already been provided, despite the carers only being with the agency for two months. This has helped foster carers feel more confident when responding to children's behaviour, such as incidents of children self-harming.

Managers have systems in place to help monitor incidents and other relevant information about the agency. The agency has received two complaints, since it registered in July 2021, from an external organisation. Managers did not ensure that the complaints were fully or independently investigated.

Managers have established a central list of panel members. The panel has considered the suitability of several fostering households transferring to the agency. In some instances, foster carers who had children in their care had already resigned from their previous fostering agency. This introduces the risk of children living in an unregistered placement should there be delays in the panel process, or if the panel is not recommending the applicants as suitable to foster.

The manager feels well supported in her role. She receives regular supervision from an experienced, qualified practitioner. The agency is currently recruiting a deputy manager to increase social work and management capacity as the agency continues to grow.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered provider should be able to demonstrate, including from written records, that the fostering service consistently follows good recruitment practice and all applicable statutory requirements and guidance. In particular, adhere to the transfer of foster carers protocol 2014 (revised) in relation to the timing of foster carers resigning from their agency when they have children in placement. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 38, paragraph 19.2)
- The registered provider should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes monitoring complaints. In particular, ensure that any complaint is not investigated or responded to by a person who is subject to the complaint. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 50, paragraph 25.1)

### **Information about this inspection**

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

## **Independent fostering agency details**

**Unique reference number:** 2635545

**Registered provider:** Apex Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** Brickfield House, High Road, Thornwood, Epping, Essex CM16 6TH

**Responsible individual:** Sali Walker-Borthwick

**Registered manager:** Claire Brooks

## **Inspector**

Paula Edwards, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
M1 2WD

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