

# Regional Foster Families – West Midlands

Regional Foster Families Limited

Suites 13 & 14, Blackpole Business Centre, Blackpole Road, Worcester,  
Worcestershire WR3 8SQ United Kingdom

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Regional Foster Placements is a national independent fostering agency with a number of branches covering England and Wales. This branch is based in Worcester and also has an office in Liverpool. The agency provides a range of fostering services such as short-term, long-term and emergency care. Currently, there are 26 children and young people accessing the fostering service and 20 fostering households.

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.

### Inspection dates: 22 to 26 November 2021

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<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	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 29 January 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**

Supervising social workers and foster carers make it a priority to understand the children's needs before they meet them. This means that foster carers are prepared and equipped to meet children's needs from the first day that they move in. Children meet their carers before they move into their new home. Children get to visit the home they will be living in and receive a welcome box that is individualised to each child's needs. For example, a child who enjoys watching a particular cartoon was given items relating to this cartoon to decorate her room. Another child was provided with a prayer mat. These thoughtful gestures help children to feel welcomed.

Children are happy living with their foster families and have positive experiences. Foster carers and staff at the agency have high expectations for children. Children feel part of the family. One child shared with the inspector that her foster carer had given her many opportunities, including encouraging and prompting her future career ambitions.

Staff have trusting relationships with foster carers and children. Supervising social workers know the needs of children and foster carers. This enables them to provide tailored support. For example, some carers are in daily contact with their supervising social workers and have additional supervision if needed. At times, this has promoted and maintained placement stability.

All foster carers speak highly of their supervising social workers. One foster carer told the inspector that her social worker was, 'Outstanding. We could not ask for a better supervising social worker, she is just amazing. Her knowledge and commitment is second to none.'

Supervising social workers provide good-quality support and supervision. This helps carers to manage the competing demands of being a foster carer. The written recordings of supervision are excellent and demonstrate the reflection and support that is provided.

Children make good progress. One child's health and life experience has significantly improved due to the foster carers supporting the child to try new experiences and encouraging them to become more physically active. This has had a positive impact on all aspects of the child's life.

All children are in education and this is monitored by the registered manager. Children enjoy a range of out-of-school activities. These are individual to each child's needs. One child proudly told the inspector about the certificates she had achieved in her gymnastics class. The agency also provides a range of outings for families to enjoy. Children's and foster carers' milestones are celebrated by the agency. This ensures that everyone feels valued.

Children are helped to keep in touch with their families. Supervising social workers and foster carers do all they can to make this a positive experience for children. On one occasion, the supervising social worker provided support and guidance to the local authority social worker to help them prepare a parent to have a positive first meeting with their child. This was effective and the child reported that it was a very good first meeting.

The assessment and preparation of foster carers is generally good, assessments are analytical and explore the suitability of potential foster carers. On one occasion, the quality of one assessment was not as good as it should have been. The agency identified this and has since improved its quality assurance processes and the assessor no longer works for the company.

Placement stability is good, with some children remaining with carers when they turn 18. Two children are in the process of being adopted by their carers, and some short-term placements are in the process of turning into longer-term arrangements.

Foster carers and supervising social workers are skilled at helping children who are exploring their individual identity. Staff identify additional services and are accepting and nurturing of children's individual needs. This helps to promote children's emotional well-being.

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

Supervising social workers provide foster carers with detailed risk assessments and safe care plans. These are updated regularly and help foster carers understand the steps that they need to take to keep children safe.

When children do go missing from foster placements, foster carers are responsive and follow the protocols in place. Return home interviews are offered to children. The registered manager monitors and reviews missing episodes allowing them to understand the risks, patterns and trends. No children in the agency are currently at risk of child exploitation.

Restraint is not promoted within the agency and foster carers receive training on de-escalation techniques to manage children's behaviour. This is also re-enforced through discussions with foster carers during supervision. The agency has recently provided carers with a six-week foundation course on attachment. The training provided by the agency gives carers a more therapeutic knowledge to inform their parenting style.

The agency has a safeguarding manager who oversees any safeguarding matters. She is alert to safeguarding risks and appropriately challenges others whose practice does not promote keeping children safe. When concerns about foster carers arise, investigations are conducted and reviewed by panel. These processes remain in place when foster carers resign mid allegation. Should individuals wish to foster in the future, this ensures that the agency's views can inform the decision-making. Foster carers are supported well during any allegation processes.

The agency has monthly safeguarding meetings to consider and discuss safeguarding matters. These are effective in monitoring concerns and keeping track of actions that need to happen. This prevents drift and delay.

During staff recruitment processes, managers do not routinely request the reasons why staff have left their previous employment when they have worked with children and vulnerable adults. All other elements of safer recruitment practices are in place and the agency updated its safer recruitment policy during the inspection when it became aware of the short fall.

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

The staff team is well supported by the registered manager. Staff feel secure in their practice because of the knowledge and guidance she provides them. The registered manager's practice is child focused and central to her decision-making.

The agency has two offices in separate regions. The office in the other region is to be registered, although this has been significantly delayed due to several unavoidable circumstances. Despite this, the registered manager has good oversight of all carers and children in both regions.

Supervising social workers have access to a range of training and have yearly funding to access training that has been identified as part of their professional development plan. This is reviewed in the monthly supervision they receive. Staff within the agency are supported well.

Foster carers are provided with tailored support to help them achieve their role as a foster carer. Supervising social workers carry small caseloads, allowing them to dedicate quality time to carers and children.

Complaints within the agency are minimal. The one complaint that was received was responded to appropriately.

The registered manager has systems in place to monitor the agency and ensure that children's needs are being met. This registered manager has a good understanding of the strengths and areas of development within the agency.

The fostering panel operates effectively and has a diverse range of skills and experience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the panel moved to online meetings but maintained full panel membership. The panel appropriately reviews the work that is presented at panel meetings and provides challenge when needed. The administration of the fostering panel is effective, and panel meeting minutes are sufficiently detailed.

There is effective challenge from the agency to ensure that children are provided with the provision they need to develop, make progress, and have their needs met. Children's needs and views are advocated for by foster carers and the agency.

The registered manager has positive working relationships with other agencies. A local authority social worker informed the inspector that staff go out of their way to ensure that everything is in place for a child that is placed with foster carers.

## 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 not—</p> <p>employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or</p> <p>(Regulation 20 (1)(a))</p> <p>The registered manager should ensure that she verifies why someone has left their previous employment when they have previously worked with children or vulnerable adults.</p>	30 December 2021

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the written report on the person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer sets out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision-maker needs in order to make an objective approval decision. The reports are accurate, up to date and include evidence-based information that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third party information. The reports are prepared, signed and dated by the social worker who assessed the prospective foster carer and countersigned and dated by the fostering team manager or a team manager of another of the provider's fostering teams. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 13.7)

### 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:** SC450627

**Registered provider:** Regional Foster Families Limited

**Registered provider address:** Old Auster, The Causeway, Mark, Highbridge,  
Somerset TA9 4QF

**Responsible individual:** Joann Catterall

**Registered manager:** Elizabeth Berry

**Telephone number:** 01905 754653

**Email address:** jo.catterall@rfp.care

## **Inspector**

Lisa O'Donovan, Social Care Inspector

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