

# Icanfoster

Icanfoster Limited

Suite 9, Unit B5, Halesfield 8, Telford, Shropshire TF7 4QN

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Ofsted registered Icanfoster Limited in August 2020. The agency undertakes recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers. The agency currently has six fostering families and eight children placed.

A registered manager is in post.

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: 17 to 21 January 2022

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **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:** not applicable

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

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

## Inspection judgements

### Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This new fostering service is still in its infancy. There are six fostering families; four of these have transferred from other agencies with children already in their care. The other fostering households are new to fostering.

Children are settled and happy living with their foster carers and are permanently matched or expected to remain with them long term. One fostering family gained special guardianship of two children in their care. As a result, they are no longer with the agency. This provides children with stability and enables them to form positive relationships.

One foster family has had a child placed with them since being approved. The matching process considered the child's needs against the foster carer's skills and experience. As a result, the child has settled quickly and feels supported by his carers.

During the inspection, children told the inspector they were happy living with their carers and enjoyed a range of activities that matched their interests. Children have a good understanding of who they can talk to if they are worried or concerned.

The registered manager and support worker ensure that they talk to children with and without their foster carers present on a regular basis. These discussions are not always well documented. This is a missed opportunity to document and monitor the child's views about the quality of care they receive. However, children's views are gathered as part of the foster carer's annual review and are documented well. One child said that the carers 'love me with all their might'.

Children have good experiences and make steady progress from their starting points. All children are in education and have good attendance. One foster carer arranges additional private tuition to support their child's educational needs. Another child is achieving academically in line with his peers after previously being behind.

Foster carers provide children with after-school activities that are individualised to their needs, such as rugby, football, performing arts and ice skating. Due to COVID-19, the agency has been limited in the activities it can offer children and foster carers. Activities had been planned but were then cancelled due to the restrictions. Despite the challenges, the agency has kept in regular contact with foster carers and children, providing individualised support when needed.

The agency understands the benefits of being physically active and how this helps individuals' emotional health and overall well-being. The agency promotes physical activity and encourages children and foster carers to access the outdoors. Some children have enjoyed a camping holiday organised by the agency and a walking activity is planned for the near future. This will be the first time that carers and children have come together as a group.

Foster carers ensure that children attend medical appointments. Children who require specialist services such as mental health services and counselling are helped to access them by their foster carers. Overall, the agency monitors children's health needs. However, they do not keep a record of when children have had or are due a local authority medical assessment. Not all foster carers have reports from these assessments. This could result in children's health needs not being met. During the inspection this information was gathered.

Foster carers help children to see their families and build positive relationships with them. The agency and foster carers support children's views on the arrangements for seeing their family. This ensures that children are involved in the decisions made.

Current and prospective foster carers spoke highly of the agency, the support provided, and the accessibility of the registered manager and support worker. Prospective foster carers are assessed and well prepared to become foster carers. The agency is in the process of implementing training using virtual reality technology. This is a new initiative, but initial feedback has been positive. The ability to give current and prospective carers a more in-depth understanding of children's experiences will further equip them for their role.

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

Foster carers and the agency keep children safe and understand their needs. Since the service has been operational, there have been no incidents or risks associated with children misusing drugs or alcohol, going missing from care, being involved in child criminal exploitation or being sexually exploited.

Prospective and approved carers receive a range of training opportunities that prepare them for the fostering role. The agency requires prospective foster carers to complete safeguarding, first aid and skills-to-foster training prior to going to panel. This gives them the knowledge to keep children safe. Training is individualised to each foster carer depending on their needs and the needs of the child.

Foster carers have not completed online safety and radicalisation awareness training. Although there are no known current risks, this is a missed opportunity to alert foster carers to the potential dangers.

Overall, safer care plans and risk assessments are in place and are of good quality. They are child-focused and provide foster carers with clear strategies to manage any potential risks. However, the agency has not implemented a risk assessment for one foster carer who has recently transferred to the agency with children already in their care. Because the foster carer knows the children well and the agency has a good understanding of the current risks, the impact of this is currently low.

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

The registered manager is approachable and valued by foster carers. Most of the agency's foster carers have transferred from other agencies, with children already in their care. This is because they wanted to work with the registered manager, having met him or worked with him previously.

The registered manager has systems in place that allow him to monitor and review the service. He completes monthly quality of care reviews. These are shared with stakeholders and Ofsted monthly. The reviews give the manager and responsible individual a good understanding of the needs of children and foster carers.

The registered manager and responsible individual have a five-year development plan in place for the agency. This gives focus and a shared direction and vision for the agency. The responsible individual has consulted with foster carers to gather their feedback and experiences to help develop the service.

The inspector gathered feedback from several local authority social workers. All were complimentary about the foster carers, the agency and the quality of care the children receive.

Since being operational, the panel has met online because of the pandemic. The central list has members with varying experiences and is culturally diverse. The panel minutes are detailed and capture the discussions that take place and the rationale for recommendations made. Reports presented to panel are generally of good quality and the agency's decision-making is clear. This means that good-quality foster carers are being employed. However, the foster carer register does not always consistently match the terms of approval set out by the decision-maker. This has the potential for children to be placed in households outside of the foster carer's terms of approval.

All panel members' appraisals are up to date. However, the agency decision-maker has not observed panel to inform his appraisal of the panel chair. This oversight has had no consequences for children.

The agency is hindered by its online recording system. Information is stored in a chaotic manner and only accessible by the registered manager. This means information is not easily accessible and there is the potential for information to be lost. The managers are aware of this issue and are looking at how best to resolve it.

The registered manager is unable to evidence that staff and panel members have been safely recruited. All have Disclosure and Barring Service checks, but some references are missing. The registered manager has had safer recruitment training, but the responsible individual has not. The poor recruitment records do not provide reassurance that staff and panel members are suitable to work with children.

## 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, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (3))</p> <p>This relates to the agency requesting children's health documents from the local authority and escalating this request if foster cares do not receive them.</p>	4 March 2022
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, having regard to—</p> <p>the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 19(b))</p> <p>This relates to the responsible individual completing safer recruitment training.</p>	4 March 2022
<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>allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which</p>	4 March 2022

that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service.

For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—

is of integrity and good character,

has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform,

is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform,

and 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)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c))

This particularly refers to ensuring that all staff who are employed by the agency are subject to the required recruitment checks.

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of children are documented and are taken into account in monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 1.7)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which includes online safety and radicalisation awareness training. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.4)
- The registered person should ensure that there are efficient and robust administrative systems, including IT and communication systems, in place. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 27.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the service's decision-maker reviews the performance of the panel chair, and for this purpose may attend a proportion of panel meetings but only as an observer. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering services', paragraph 5.15)

## **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:** 2576457

**Registered provider:** Icanfoster Limited

**Registered provider address:** Agincourt House, 14 Clytha Park Road, Newport  
NP20 4PB

**Responsible individual:** Richard Spencer

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## **Inspector**

Lisa O'Donovan, Social Care Inspector



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