

Fostering London Limited

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34 Shelbourne Road, London N17 9YH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency aims to provide long-term/permanent placements, short-term, enhanced, parent and child placements and emergency placements.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 21 children in placement and 15 approved fostering households. The independent fostering agency was registered in May 2015. The manager was registered with Ofsted in January 2018.

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: 10 to 14 January 2022

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 17 July 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This fostering agency offers an outstanding quality of care service to children. Children's progress and experiences are excellent, and children make significant improvement from their starting points. Managers focus on achieving secure, stable placements, which means that a high number of children live permanently with their foster families and they have a keen sense of security.

Children receive personalised care that meets their individual needs. Children benefit from the fostering service's careful placement planning. Introductions between children and their prospective foster carers are sensitively coordinated and move at the child's pace. Children receive useful information about the service and the family identified to care for them. This helps to settle children from the outset and enhances placement success.

Children benefit from the agency's robust and effective matching process. Children are expertly matched with their foster carers, who understand what is required to ensure that placement goals are achieved. Children speak candidly about the significant difference the agency makes to their lives. A child told the inspector, 'I love Aunty. She gives me kisses and hugs all the time. I'm so happy where I am living now. Aunty is a beautiful person.'

Children have very good opportunities to express their wishes, feelings and views prior to and throughout their placements. The agency makes exceptional efforts to ensure that children can communicate their views. Children do not make complaints about the service, and routinely participate in their statutory reviews and their foster carers' annual reviews. These help managers to understand how children would like their placements to progress and provide them with insight to children's ideas about shaping the service.

Children's identity needs are well identified and met by the fostering service. Staff ensure that the matching process considers children's needs in relation to their culture, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and disability. One young person said, 'My foster carer really supports my being non-binary. She's easy to speak to about my identity. She's open to discussion, level-headed and gives me good advice.'

Children's school attendance is good, and they participate fully in educational resources made available to them. The agency's quality and improvement lead ensures that children's learning outcomes are well monitored. When children need additional or specialist educational services, the agency ensures that these are accessed. Children benefit from the agency's commitment to promoting educational success and celebrating their achievements. This in turn motivates children to be ambitious and to aim high.

Children's healthcare needs are understood by their foster carers, who manage their medical and treatment plans safely. Staff receive training in relevant healthcare, such as paediatric first aid and infection prevention and control.

Children benefit from the fostering agency's protocols and procedures in the prevention of COVID-19. This preventive work has helped to keep children and foster carers safe throughout the pandemic.

Children receive exceptional guidance and advice to help them to manage their mental health. Children and foster families receive support, useful resources and training around key issues such as anxiety, depression, and anger management. When appropriate, children have access to specialist mental health resources. This helps children to develop and maintain good emotional well-being.

Young people are prepared for and supported into adulthood. This is so that they can manage their lives independently, reach their potential and achieve economic well-being. Some children are already thinking about their future care needs. One child said of their foster family, 'This is my family now, and I'm making it known that I want to stay here when I'm well beyond 18.'

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

Staff work hard to protect children from neglect, harm and abuse. The staff team and foster carers ensure that the safety and well-being of children are central to the agency's work.

The agency ensures that foster carers are aware of the vulnerabilities of children. The assessment, preparation, training and supervision of foster carers are excellent and emphasise safeguarding children. Comprehensive policies and procedures are regularly updated to ensure compliance with developing guidance and legislation. Staff routinely review and share relevant and new social care research and study material. This informs and updates staff and foster carers' safeguarding knowledge and practice. This helps to keep children safe.

There are very few instances of children going missing from care, involvement in child sexual abuse or child criminal exploitation. Risk assessments identify risks to children and are tailored for individual children's needs. Staff update these regularly.

Risk management and safer care plans are detailed and effective. They provide foster carers with guidance about anticipating and managing any risk-taking behaviour. This helps to reduce risks and to help keep children safe from harm.

The staff team routinely ensures that supervisory visits explore and scrutinise issues of child protection. This is also the case for looked after children reviews and foster carers' annual reviews. Staff regularly meet with children to obtain their views of placement progress and issues. Staff complete, at a minimum, one

unannounced home visit to each fostering household per year. This is to further monitor the appropriateness and safety of fostering placements.

Foster carers are highly skilled in managing children's sometimes extreme challenging behaviour. Foster carers and staff consistently promote positive behaviour. They are mindful of the impact children's historical trauma may have on influencing the way they sometimes present. Foster carers sensitively explore with children the reasons behind inappropriate behaviour and offer alternative, safe ways for children to deal with difficult emotions. This is testament to the agency and foster carers' resilience and commitment to providing safe and quality care.

Managers ensure the safe vetting and recruitment of staff and foster carers. This ensures that those working with children are suitable to do so. Investigations into concerns or allegations are prompt and appropriate. Managers ensure that their communication with safeguarding professionals is regular and effective. Staff attend and make valuable contributions to professional meetings that explore child protection issues.

The fostering service has strong and effective working partnerships with other safeguarding agencies. This promotes an effective co-ordinated approach to safeguarding children. A placing authority manager says of a child's placement, 'I am amazed by the quality of the child's interaction and relationship with his foster mother. This is a very caring, nurturing and warm placement. [The child] is no doubt thriving at his placement and is likely to achieve optimum in life should he remain at this placement.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leadership and management of this fostering service is highly efficient and effective. The management team is very strong in its leadership and is visible to all interested parties, particularly foster carers and children.

The registered manager and responsible individual are both supervising social workers for the agency. They are experienced foster carers themselves and qualified social workers. Both have extensive knowledge and experience. They are highly skilled practitioners and leaders, with a clear vision and high ambition for the service and the achievements of children.

The fostering service has effective monitoring systems in place, for example the tracking of individual children's progress and outcomes, particularly in relation to their educational progress. Robust, frequent and systematic monitoring enhances the fostering service's ability to continually improve the outcomes and experiences of children.

The fostering service's preparation, training and support of foster carers and staff is effective and is a clear strength of this service. The agency ensures that prospective foster carers have good insight into the needs of children, and that they are well equipped to meet children's identified needs. Foster carers feel valued

and appreciated by managers and this motivates them to meet the very high standards of care set and demonstrated by agency leaders.

A foster carer said, 'Communication with staff is brilliant. They're available day and night. The way they work helps to keep children safe. It's a small agency, and completely family orientated. I like that.'

Managers have resolved weaknesses highlighted at the agency's previous Ofsted inspection. This inspection notes that some staff, namely the quality and improvement lead and contracted independent social workers, receive informal supervision which is not always recorded. This is not in line with expected formal systems of staff support.

The agency's fostering panel operates effectively. The panel carries out appropriate analysis of the work that is presented at panel meetings. The administration of the fostering panel is effective. However, managers are yet to appoint a panel member who is care experienced. The quality of foster carers' assessments presented at the fostering panel is of a very high standard.

The fostering service facilitates effective communication with placing authorities and other external professionals. This effective partnership working enables the fostering service to ensure that appropriate families are available to meet the needs of children. Local authority social workers receive very regular updates of placement issues from the fostering agency.

A local authority social worker said, 'My experience so far has been positive from both the foster carer and the supervising social worker. I have observed the child to be settled and content in the placement. He feels part of the family and listened to. He has made good progress since moving to this placement as the foster carer understands his needs. Communication is effective, and emails and queries are responded to in a timely manner.'

This fostering service provides high-quality, safe placements for children. As a result, children make significant progress and have very positive experiences. Children live in long-term, permanent placements, develop secure attachments, and have a true sense of belonging and love.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the number, skills and experience of persons on the central list are sufficient to enable the fostering service to constitute panels that are equipped to make competent recommendations to the fostering service provider, taking into account the nature of the children and carers that the service caters for. In particular, that the fostering panel includes a panel member who is care experienced. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.8)
- The registered person should ensure that a written record is kept by the fostering service detailing the time, date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. The record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.5)

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: SC488788

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Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

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