

Family Works Fostering Limited

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Suite 19–20, Business Centre, 8 Madeira Avenue, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 3EB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Family Works Fostering is a small privately owned agency operating from one office based in Southend. The agency provides emergency, short-term, long-term and parent-and-child placements. The agency currently supports 32 fostering households and 44 children.

The suitably qualified and experienced manager has been in post since the agency registered with Ofsted in 2017.

Inspection dates: 24 to 28 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 good

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

Date of last inspection: 4 December 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is a good fostering agency with elements of outstanding practice. The agency staff and carers all share a therapeutic child-focused approach to caring for children and a determination to achieve the best outcomes for children.

The children are well matched with their fostering families. As a result, most children are thriving in families with whom they have lived for a number of years. One child's social worker said, 'It's a brilliant placement, almost too good to be true.' The agency has successfully recruited a wide range of carers from different cultural backgrounds and who have different life experiences. This has enabled the agency to successfully match children with carers who have shared the child's societal experiences, such as prejudice, growing up in care, making a new life in a new country and learning a new language.

The agency provides bespoke emotional and practical support that helps children to develop a sense of stability. A carer said that the agency therapist 'makes a bad day a good day' and helps them to understand and meet their child's needs better.

The children are well supported to be healthy and safe and to succeed in their aspirations and goals. The agency has supported children and their carers well through the uncertainty and emotional turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the challenge of home education. Carers encourage the children to pursue individual interests, such as cub scouts, baking and swimming. The agency celebrates the children's success and progress. The children are presented with certificates for individual achievements, such as 'managing well during COVID' and 'returning to education'. Carers said that they and the children really value this, and that the outstanding contributions annual dinner 'is the highlight of the year'.

The carers creatively support and recognise the importance of the children's relationships with their family and friends. One child was delighted that their new carers recently took them and a friend to watch the child's sister in a dance show. Other foster carers have driven children long distances so that the children can have weekend stays with family members, or they have arranged video calls with family abroad.

The foster carers' empathy and understanding for children is based on therapeutic attachment training. Carers said that the COVID-19 pandemic had sometimes presented an opportunity for the family to bond without the previous outside pressures. One child's social worker said, 'There is a beautiful relationship between the carer and child.' Children are core members of the family and often enjoy the developing sibling-type relationships with carers' birth children. For some children, this has provided them with an opportunity to be a child themselves. Other children have been able to nurture younger foster siblings.

This agency makes a difference to the children, and the agency staff know the children well. As a result, most children make strong progress from their starting points. For example, one child at the point of moving in with their foster family, despite their age, was presenting with little or no recognisable speech. This child has now found their voice. They can articulate their needs and are growing in confidence.

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

Agency staff and foster carers ensure that keeping children safe is at the core of everything that they do. Children said that they feel consulted with and listened to. Children know how to make a complaint, and they feel confident to do so should they need to. This is because the agency staff, manager and responsible individual are all accessible and familiar to them.

When children go missing, the foster carers take appropriate action to try to secure their safe return. The agency ensures regular and effective communication with partner professionals and shares any information of concern. This has helped children's social workers and other agencies to better understand the risks to particular children.

When children are at known risk, the agency takes effective action to support carers to understand and minimise these risks. The agency has an effective system of peer support. The agency matches up those carers who are caring for children who face particular risks, such as criminal exploitation or gang affiliation, with mentor carers who have experience, skills and knowledge in those areas.

Any allegations or complaints in respect of foster carers are shared with safeguarding partner professionals and robustly investigated. The agency returns all carers who have been subject to an allegation or complaint to the fostering panel for a special review. On occasion, the agency has commissioned further independent investigation. These additional levels of transparent review help to ensure that concerns are fully scrutinised. Foster carers are well supported through this process.

The majority of foster carers complete a range of relevant safeguarding training. This includes contextual safeguarding, which helps them to identify and manage specific risks to children more effectively. Training in keeping children safe online is planned. However, few foster carers have completed preventing radicalisation training. Most, but not all carers have completed core health and safety training. This means that there is potential for carers to not be as aware of these wider areas of safeguarding.

The agency ensures that background suitability checks are undertaken for new people joining the agency as either staff or panel members. However, there is not always sufficient scrutiny of applications and, on occasion, there is a lack of professional curiosity. Gaps in employment history are not always identified and explored and one staff member's identity was not evidenced sufficiently. This means that there is potential for information relevant to the applicant's suitability to be missed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is effective. He has a clear vision and leads the service through successful modelling of good practice to staff and carers. As result, there are many outstanding elements in this agency. Children, carers and staff all described the manager is an ever-present and accessible figure in the agency. This knowledge that the manager and staff are always available has contributed to foster carers feeling emotionally held and supported regardless of whether there was a need to contact the manager.

Reflective practice permeates the agency. Foster carers are helped to develop greater understanding of children's emotional needs through good-quality training in the agency's therapeutic model and attachment and trauma.

The panel is effective and makes child-focused decisions. The agency decision maker does not hold back from questioning panel. Together, the panel and agency decision maker quality assure foster carer suitability assessments effectively. They ensure that only suitable foster carers with a clear motivation to support children are approved.

Foster carers are well prepared for the initial fostering task through effective post-approval induction training and being 'buddied' with more experienced carers. They experience wrap-around support from the agency, such as regular access to a therapist and practical support from the agency support worker. Carers said that this gave them confidence, and they attributed their success to the support, care, training and commitment shown to them by the agency. One carer said that their agency social worker was the 'epitome of what a social worker should be'.

Partner agencies are consistently positive in their feedback about the agency staff, and they value the work that the agency does. One placing authority team manager said, 'She [the fostering agency social worker] is excellent. I rank her as one of the best I have ever seen.'

The quality of the care and support provided to foster carers has meant that the agency has successfully increased its pool of available foster carers year-on-year through word of mouth. However, carers said that this is a highly personalised agency with a real family feel. One carer said, 'I'll never leave. I have the best agency. Thanks to them I am much stronger and am able to care for my child.'

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>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>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—</p> <p>is of integrity and good character,</p> <p>is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>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) (3)(a)(c))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>14 February 2022</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that appropriate training in first aid, keeping safe online, preventing radicalisation and health and safety, including the management of hazardous substances, is made available to, and completed by all, foster carers. ('Fostering services: National Minimum Standards', 20.8)

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: 1242101

Registered provider: Family Works Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 46 Parham Drive, Ilford, Essex IG2 6NB

Responsible individual: Wendy Edward-Tsuro

Registered manager: Tafadzwa Dzinoruma

Telephone number: 01702 597 797

Email address:

Inspectors

Joanna Heller, Social Care Inspector

Tom Anthony, Social Care Inspector

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