

Wellcare Fostering Services

Wellcare Fostering Services Limited company number 04963908

Suite 504, Olympic House, 28-42 Clements Road, Ilford IG1 1BA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned independent fostering agency based in the London Borough of Redbridge. It aims to meet a range of placement needs for children, which includes parent and child placements. The agency is currently providing placements for 31 children. There are currently 26 approved fostering households. Three young adults are living in 'staying put' arrangements.

The agency registered in October 2004. The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

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: 14 to 18 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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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	requires improvement to be good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 4 September 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

Children thrive in nurturing placements which are dedicated to meeting their aspirations and needs. Children's comments include, 'I am very happy here', 'I like foster care, we do everything together' and 'Wellcare is good'. Social workers highlight that they are 'impressed' with the agency.

Children are happier and more confident from when they moved in with their foster carers, this enhances their self-esteem. They receive encouragement to chair their own review meetings and achieve their goals. Parents in parent and child placements positively highlight how foster carers have helped them.

Children receive good physical and mental health support. Foster carers effectively care for children with varying disabilities. There are examples of foster carers learning British sign language and working in partnership with the mental health home treatment team.

Foster carers value education and strongly advocate for additional resources and the most appropriate schools for children. Children have successfully achieved their GCSE qualifications. Foster carers help older children with job and college applications. Three children have gone on to attend university.

Children's achievements and birthdays are celebrated. Children also have the opportunity to socialise together at Christmas parties and summer events. The introduction of the children's champion role will enable children to have a greater influence within the agency.

Children benefit from good cultural matches, which helps them to develop a positive identity. The agency's placement officer also assists with translating and supporting placements. There is good attention to the religious needs of children enabling them to attend their places of worship, follow traditions and participate in religious festivals.

Some children have expressed attitudes which are racist and sexist. There was limited evidence to show how these views were challenged and how these children were being educated to understand British values. This is important to help them with settling into life in the United Kingdom.

Older children have the opportunity to remain with their carers into adulthood in 'staying put' arrangements. This provides them with ongoing stability into adulthood. Older children have varying degrees of independence. They do not have a structured independent living skills programme, which would prepare them for adult life.

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

Children benefit from good safeguarding arrangements. Children report that they feel safe. A local authority team manager highlighted that the registered manager 'went above and beyond to safeguard children'.

Research-informed practice keeps children safe, an example being the 'secure base' model. The implementation of a 'secure base' model helps foster carers to sensitively respond to children and their behaviours. Foster carers are also supported by training in their own resilience and mindfulness.

Children quickly feel part of the foster family, which gives them a sense of belonging. Foster carers highlight that they 'love' their role. There are currently no issues with children going missing from care. There are also no concerns regarding radicalisation, extremism or with children being criminally or sexually exploited.

Children receive highly effective individualised support from the agency's supervising social workers. A child stated the supervisory social worker, 'is the best person I have ever worked with'. Stability meetings are requested to ensure that children receive the necessary support to enable them to continue living in their foster home when the placement is fragile.

Everyone within the fostering household receives safer caring training. This enables the foster carers and members of their household to have a shared understanding of what is required to keep children safe. Young adults in 'staying put' placements can also attend other training events, an example is first-aid training.

Placing authorities commend foster carers for their ability to successfully care for children who have complex needs and who have struggled to live in other foster homes. A social worker highlighted the foster carer 'is working her magic' and has given their child 'the stability she never had'.

There is a strong relationship with the local safeguarding personnel, which enables staff and foster carers to access an extensive range of training. This complements the training available within the agency. Training has helped to increase foster carers' awareness of issues relating to child protection, neglect, social media, female genital mutilation, child sexual and criminal exploitation. This strengthens safeguarding practice.

Where there has been an issue of standards of care, a local authority team manager highlighted 'the response has been timely, appropriate and effective'. Child protection concerns are promptly reported to placing authorities. Leaders and managers notify Ofsted of the instigation of a child protection enquiry. However, the outcome of the enquiry is not always reported as required.

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

The fostering agency has grown significantly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has presented leaders and managers with specific challenges in regard to monitoring and ensuring that foster carers attend the required training. However, these shortfalls have not impacted on the good quality of care. Leaders and managers have a plan of action which focuses on the areas requiring further development.

The agency offers foster carers a wide range of training, however, there is an issue with attendance. The expected vocational training has not been completed within the required timescale. This does not reflect the information in the agency's statement of purpose regarding appropriately trained foster carers.

Leaders and managers have not fully addressed a requirement from the last inspection. There is a continued need for more diligent monitoring of the quality of care. Regulation 35 reports do not include all the required information. This is not helped by the agency not having an effective system which tracks the progress of children.

The assessments completed for prospective foster carers are generally of a good standard. Assessments are analytical and highlight prospective foster carers' strengths. However, there is limited exploration in relation to the ability of foster carers to provide parent and child placements.

The agency succeeds in its vision to 'transform lives'. Feedback from local authorities, foster carers and children is generally very positive. A social worker, however, did highlight that they did not receive children's weekly logs. Furthermore, some foster carers do not keep a consistent and meaningful record of children's day-to-day experiences.

Leaders and managers pride themselves on their wish for 'quality rather than quantity' and to have an agency which provides 'a personal touch'. A good example of this is taking chocolates and flowers to a foster carer after an incident. Leaders and managers know all the children and they positively refer to them as 'our children'.

Children and foster carers receive support from a culturally diverse, multilingual staff team. A local authority commissioner praised the partnership working in helping to move children from residential care into fostering. They stated, 'We experienced very good outcomes and have really valued the opportunity to work differently in how we plan, assess and match'.

Children receive care from foster carers and staff who are well supported. Social workers describe foster carers as 'amazing' and 'unique'. The insightful fostering panel focuses on promoting the best outcomes for children and constructively contributes to improvements within the agency.

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 the fostering service is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its statement of purpose. (Regulation (3) (5))</p> <p>In particular, ensure foster carers attend the appropriate training.</p>	1 May 2022
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and</p> <p>improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3))</p>	1 May 2022
<p>Obtain the information specified in part 2 of Schedule 3 relating to a person applying to become a foster parent and their household. (Regulation 26 (2)(a))</p> <p>In particular, the foster carer's capacity to provide parent and child placements.</p>	1 May 2022
<p>If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the</p>	1 May 2022

table. (Regulation 36 (1))

In particular, notify Ofsted of the outcome of a child protection enquiry.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure children are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities. In particular, challenge and educate children on racist and sexist attitudes. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 3.4)
- The registered person should ensure there are comprehensive arrangements for preparing and supporting young people to make the transition to independence. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 12.3)
- The registered person should ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This relates to measuring the starting points and progress of children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.1)
- The registered person should ensure that staff and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files. There should be a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and action should be taken when needed. In particular, children's logs and accurately recording children's heritage. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.2)

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: SC061984

Registered provider: Wellcare Fostering Services Limited company number 04963908

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Inspector

Sharon Payne, Social Care Inspector

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