

New Routes Fostering

Father Hudson's Society

Father Hudson's Society, Coventry Road, Coleshill, Birmingham B46 3FG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

New Routes Fostering is a small voluntary fostering service that has been operating since 1992. It is run by Father Hudson's Society and is based in Coleshill. Father Hudson's Society is a social care agency of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham and is a registered charity.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in December 2017.

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: 15 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

Children receive a good level of support from foster carers. Supervising social workers have a manageable caseload, which means that foster carers receive the support that they need. As a result, children are safe and well cared for.

The agency has a panel with an experienced chairperson and experienced members. The fostering panel is provided with thorough and detailed assessment documentation relating to prospective carers. The agency decision-maker is experienced in undertaking this role and can challenge decisions made if necessary. Because of this, only well-prepared, safe and suitable carers are approved to provide care for children.

Children are involved in the fostering assessment process. This enhances the assessment process and children's views are taken to the panel. This gives children a sense of involvement and they know that their views are valued.

Foster carers and agency staff provide good emotional support for children. Foster carers receive consultation from an external therapist, sourced by the agency. This has improved foster carers' knowledge and helps make sure that children's emotional needs are well met. As a result, children build trusting relationships with their foster carers.

Children are doing well in their education. Those who previously struggled with education are supported by their foster carers, who advocate for them when necessary. For example, foster carers ensured that there was support in place for children to attend school during COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, children are thriving in school and are making progress.

Professionals speak positively of the foster carers and the agency. One social worker said that she is happy with the care that the child receives and the communication from foster carers. This gives social workers confidence that children are receiving the best possible care.

Supervising social workers hold regular supervision sessions with foster carers. This keeps the social workers up to date and informed about the children's needs. As a result, foster carers can tailor the care they provide to children to meet their individual needs.

The children take part in a wide range of activities and develop a broad set of interests. The children enjoy agency-run participation events. For example, children enjoyed attending a Christmas-themed event and have been dancing. This offers children the opportunity to meet with other children who have shared similar experiences to theirs, while having fun and experiencing new situations.

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

Children say they feel they are part of the family. Children see their foster carers as trusted adults and these relationships help to keep them safe. The positive relationships that children enjoy with their carers mean that they can talk to them about the worries they have. These relationships enable honest conversations to take place with children about their safety.

Foster carers are experienced and trained in subjects that help them to keep children safe. This includes training in radicalisation, exploitation and safeguarding. Foster carers confidently told the inspectors the signs and indicators of risk posed to children and how they ensure that they keep children safe from abuse.

Foster carers rarely use physical interventions, as they are well equipped to manage children's behaviours. The agency's therapist has supported foster carers to understand the triggers and causes of children's behaviours and how best to respond.

Despite there only being two physical interventions since the last inspection, records relating to these incidents do not provide sufficient detail on the rationale why a physical intervention was implemented or what happened following the incident. This could hinder the manager's oversight of the use of physical intervention.

Most children do not go missing from their foster homes. However, when this does occur, foster carers take appropriate action. They take steps to understand the reasons why children go missing and act on the information they have received. This means that incidents of children going missing are reducing from a low starting point.

One panel member has not been recruited in accordance with the agency's recruitment policy. Specifically, employment references do not explore the person's suitability to work with vulnerable children and have not been verified by the agency.

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

The registered manager has not reviewed one complaint in line with the agency's complaints policy. The registered manager did not complete an internal investigation or share the concerns with the local authority designated officer (LADO). The registered manager took swift action to report these concerns to the LADO during the inspection but an investigation into the concerns raised in the complaint has not yet taken place.

The registered manager's monitoring systems requires improvement and have failed to capture learning and address shortfalls. For example, safer caring plans and risk assessments do not capture the guidance from the in-house therapists and the guidance supervising social workers provide to foster carers following incidents. This

is a missed opportunity to drive improvements and inform future practice. As a result, two recommendations from the previous inspection have not been met.

The agency does not always rigorously challenge placing authorities when they have not provided the required documentation to foster carers in a timely manner, such as children's placement plans, care plans and delegated authority. This oversight means that some foster carers do not have all the information about children that they need.

Escalation of concerns by the registered manager and supervising social workers to partner agencies is not always timely or effective. This is because supervising social workers and the registered manager do not consistently challenge partner agencies when there are concerns or when they have not received a response. This may result in children and foster carers not receiving the support they need.

Children's records provide a basic overview of their day-to-day experience and the progress they have made. Not all records provide a clear account of what happened. This undermines the progress that children have made and does not help children who may want to access their records in later life to understand their journey when they lived with their foster carers.

Foster carers spoke highly of the registered manager and the agency. The whole staff team supported their foster carers during COVID-19 restrictions, with regular communication and support packs.

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 specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that foster carers receive all statutory documentation when the child is care in their care.</p>	1 March 2022
<p>The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 18 (4))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that complaints are managed in accordance with the provider's internal complaints procedure.</p>	1 March 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that placement matching is completed for all children prior to living with the foster carers. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that there is effective partnership working to address concerns with local authorities when foster carers have raised concerns that have hindered them in providing a safe and caring environment that meets the needs of the child. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 15.2)
- The registered person should ensure that all employment references obtained for panel members have explored the person's suitability to work with vulnerable

children and have been verified for their authenticity. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 19.1)

- The registered person should ensure that they have monitoring systems in place that drive improvements and future practice in relation to incidents of physical intervention, children going missing from care and complaints. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)
- The registered person should ensure that allegations against people who work with children, that may on the face of it may appear relatively insignificant, are reported by the registered manager to the locally authority designated officer. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 22.6)
- The registered person should ensure that records are clear and up to date and contribute to an understanding of the child's life, and that children are involved, to obtain their views. This relates to individual children's risk assessments, safe caring documents and daily recordings. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.6)

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: SC034855

Registered provider: Father Hudson's Society

Registered provider address: St George's House, Gerards Way, Coleshill,
Birmingham B46 3FG

Responsible individual: Andrew Quinn

Registered manager: Joanne Walthew

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Inspectors

Sam Dulay-Kainth, Social Care Inspector
Debbie Holder, Social Care Inspector

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