

Phoenix Community Care

Phoenix Community Care

Room 41/42, 639 The Trampery, 639 High Road, Tottenham, London N17 8AA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned independent fostering agency based in London. The agency has a small number of foster care placements elsewhere in the UK. The agency provides foster care placements for asylum-seeking children, unaccompanied minors, children with complex health needs, sibling groups and parents with children.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering service had 20 approved fostering households and 28 children placed with its foster carers. The independent fostering agency registered in July 2004. The two managers registered with Ofsted in July 2004 and October 2020, respectively.

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 March 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: 12 March 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

The fostering service provides good-quality care. Outcomes for children are positive and children have good experiences. They develop secure attachments with their foster families and have a very strong sense of belonging. One child told the inspector, 'I have a home and that's all I wanted. I love having a family that really cares.'

Children receive personalised care that meets their individual needs. The fostering service pays good attention to issues of equality and diversity. For example, children have access to interpreters and translated information. Foster carers encourage children to practice their chosen faith if they wish to do so.

Children benefit from the agency's effective matching process. Some unaccompanied minors are placed with foster carers who originate from their country and region of birth. They therefore share very similar experiences as refugees. Children feel that their foster carers have a good understanding of their past experiences and trauma and so can help them to settle in the UK.

Children confirmed that they feel listened to. They are aware of how to make complaints, but do not do so. The agency's children's champion supports children to have a voice within the fostering service. However, this is an area that requires further development to ensure that children have greater influence in shaping services provided to children.

Children live healthy lifestyles. Foster carers and staff ensure that there is good promotion of the children's physical, emotional and social well-being. Children have good access to primary healthcare services and receive advice and support from specialist services as required. This is particularly the case for children who have complex medical needs.

Children benefit from the fostering agency's protocols and procedures regarding the prevention of COVID-19. This preventive work has helped to keep children and foster carers safe throughout the pandemic. During this time, children have continued to have fun and positive experiences with their foster families.

Children's learning outcomes and general development are good. They make good academic and vocational progress. School and college attendance is high, and children make steady progress from their starting points. Staff are proactive in challenging educational specialists if they feel that children's educational provision fails to meet their learning needs. Children, their foster carers and staff celebrate children's achievements.

The fostering service prepares older children for adulthood. They receive support to develop practical life skills to increase their independence. A small number of young adults remain living with their foster carers in 'staying put' arrangements. This allows

them to remain living with their foster families and maintain existing relationships for continued support and guidance.

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

Foster carers and staff of the fostering service work hard to protect children from harm and abuse. They ensure that the safety and well-being of children are paramount. Children say that they feel safe with their foster families. A young mother told the inspector, 'I feel very safe where I am, it's peaceful with no gangs or drug dealers. [The foster carer] keeps me safe. Always.'

Children benefit from the fostering service's comprehensive child protection policies and procedures. However, the agency is yet to develop adult protection policies for parent and child placements to ensure that foster carers are aware of the appropriate action to take in the event of a safeguarding incident.

Children have good opportunities to speak with staff in private when they complete home visits. Staff routinely complete unannounced visits to foster carers' homes. This further promotes the safety of children.

The assessment and preparation of foster carers focus strongly on child protection. This supports the safe care of children. Foster families have safe care policies in place. These outline how fostering households will keep children safe. However, managers do not consistently ensure that safe care policies address the specific needs of individual children. This does not offer foster carers guidance on managing particular household issues and risks for each child that they care for.

Placement plans address children's changing needs and promote strategies that help to reduce risk-taking behaviour. Staff complete comprehensive risk assessments. These help to reduce known and anticipated risks. Instances of children going missing from home, substance misuse, involvement in child sexual and criminal exploitation do not occur. Foster carers do not restrain children.

Foster carers set clear and consistent boundaries for children, and support plans are individualised. These plans provide staff with effective strategies to help to manage children's sometimes complex behaviour and promote appropriate behaviour. An independent reviewing officer reported to a child, 'It was lovely to hear that you are getting much better at listening to [foster carer's name]. Well done. [The foster carer] said she is very consistent, so you know what to expect at all times and this is really helping.'

Managers and the fostering service's human resources team ensure the safe vetting and recruitment of staff and panel members. However, managers do not always verify written references. This is contrary to safe recruitment practices.

Investigations into allegations are prompt and appropriate. Managers ensure that their communication with safeguarding specialists, such as local authority designated officers and the police, is regular and effective. A local authority social worker said of

a parent and child placement, '[The foster carer] worked well with the local authority. She made contact with the social worker on a regular basis to share information. She is very safety conscious, and this was helpful to the mother in placement when identifying risks to the child.'

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

Leaders and managers are ambitious and strive for continual improvement. However, a number of shortfalls are noted in the leadership of the service. The fostering service has two registered managers in post who job-share. Both are experienced managers and are former foster carers themselves. They are appropriately qualified and experienced to manage the service.

Weaknesses are noted in the managers' monitoring of the service. For example, the quality of care review, as required by the regulations, lacks input from key stakeholders. Reports do not include comments from children, local authority representatives or staff. This does not demonstrate that stakeholders have influence in developing and improving the service.

Staff and foster carers receive excellent training. This supports them to provide safe, personalised care. Foster carers report that training is relevant and of a high quality. However, a small number of foster carers are yet to complete the Training Development Standards within the 12-month deadline from the point of their initial approval.

The agency's case records are orderly, well maintained and provide good insight into children's journeys and the work being completed with children and families. However, some foster carers' logs are not kept current. Staff are continuing to work with these foster carers to help resolve this ongoing issue.

Managers do not ensure that all foster care agreements are updated and reflect foster carers' current approval status. The terms of foster carers' approval are also sometimes unclear on annual review documents. This does not ensure that there is a formal agreement of the types of placements foster carers can provide. This should be consistently reflected in all related records.

The service is well resourced to meet the needs of foster carers and children. Staff receive good support and meaningful supervision. However, not all staff have annual appraisals. This does not ensure that their learning and development needs are well met. However, foster carers overwhelmingly say that the support they receive from the fostering service is excellent. Staff maintain good communication with foster carers and regularly visit them and children at their homes. Managers' and staff's communication with other professionals is effective and consistent.

The service's fostering panel operates effectively and benefits by having a membership that is drawn from a diverse range of professional backgrounds. The panel undertakes clear and appropriate analysis of the work presented at panel

meetings. The administration of the fostering panel is effective, and panel meeting minutes are sufficiently detailed.

Staff complete foster carer assessments that are of a good standard. The annual reviewing process is thorough. This promotes the regular review of foster carers' suitability to continue to care for children.

This inspection highlights a number of shortfalls in the leadership and management of the service. However, these do not negatively impact on the quality of care provided to children and families as their protection, progress and experiences are positive.

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
The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (3))	1 June 2022
The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a)) In particular, that the fostering service develops adult protection policies and procedures, and devise safe care policies specific to children and families in placement.	1 June 2022
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them— receive appropriate appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))	1 June 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all people working in, or for, the fostering service have references checked to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities. Telephone enquiries should be made to each referee to verify the written reference. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 19.1)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are able to evidence that the Training, Support and Development Standards have been attained within 12 months of approval. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.2)
- 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 is a system in place to monitor the

quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed. This pertains to foster carers' logs, foster care agreements and foster carers' annual review documents. ('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: SC040334

Registered provider: Phoenix Community Care

Registered provider address: Room 41/42, 639 The Trampery, 639 High Road, Tottenham, London N17 8AA

Responsible individual: Gareth Hawkes

Registered manager: Pauline Hawkes
Jeffrey Coates

Telephone number: 02088876888

Email address: info@phoenixcommunity.co.uk

Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022