

# Flowers Fostering Limited

Flowers Fostering Limited

Ability House, 121 Brooker Road, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1JH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned agency registered in December 2019. The agency provides long-term, short-term, emergency and parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency had four fostering households and was providing foster placements for two children.

The suitably qualified and experienced manager took up the post on 1 June 2021 and registered with Ofsted in December 2021.

### Inspection dates: 25 to 29 April 2022

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>requires improvement to be good</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The independent fostering agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

**Date of last inspection:** 16 August 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** inadequate

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good**

The agency has provided some training to carers to help them understand their roles and to enhance their skills and knowledge. However, carers are not provided with targeted training to ensure that they are best equipped to meet the individual needs of the children who live with them. For example, carers who are supporting children with additional needs such as autism spectrum conditions or attention deficit disorder have not received training in these areas.

Foster carers are not familiar with, and do not implement in practice, the therapeutic secure-base model of care detailed in the service's statement of purpose. As a result, the carers are not always well equipped to meet the children's needs. This has sometimes undermined stability for children.

The children develop positive relaxed relationships with their carers. However, some carers do not fully understand children's complex or emotional needs and the impact of trauma. One placing authority representative said that a child they had placed had become more introverted, and that another child had moved on in an unplanned way. In both situations, this was linked to the carers' lack of understanding of trauma or the child's particular needs.

The carers support the children's basic health and education needs. They ensure that preventative health checks are completed. The children are supported by their carers to have good school attendance.

The manager now ensures that new carers are appropriately assessed and that children are appropriately matched with their carers.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good**

Recruitment procedures for panel members and fostering agency staff are not always sufficiently thorough. On one occasion, gaps in employment history were not identified and explored. Checks were not taken up with the fostering service for which a panel member had previously been a foster carer. Therefore, information that has the potential to have a bearing on an applicant's suitability may not be identified.

Household and individual children's safer care plans do not always consider all adults who are actively involved in the fostering household and what is and is not an appropriate support role. Children's individual risk assessments and safer care plans do not always consider all relevant child-specific risks and how these risks will be reduced. This does not safeguard children effectively.

Foster carers receive basic safeguarding training. However, some foster carers remain unclear about what to do if a child makes a disclosure about a person in a position of trust. One foster carer did not understand the importance of keeping the agency informed about relevant changes to their life, and about a regular visitor to the home. There is no information to suggest that this person posed any risk to children, and the agency subsequently carried out suitability checks. However, the agency was not able to carry out these suitability checks promptly because it was unaware of this situation.

Foster carers do not receive training in, and do not always have sufficient awareness of, how to keep children safe online. This is particularly relevant for those caring for children who are technologically astute and have a history of being at risk online.

The agency records now provide improved detail about incidents when children go missing and the action taken by carers. However, the agency does not have a system to request that the child's placing authority conducts a return home interview. This means that potential opportunities to understand aspects of risk are missed.

The agency completes annual health and safety checks on foster carers' homes. However, in some cases, the agency is not able to demonstrate that any risks identified have been addressed.

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

This agency was judged inadequate at the last full inspection. Ofsted undertook a monitoring visit in November 2021. At this inspection, the agency is judged as requires improvement to be good.

The agency has not carried out a formal review of two of three fostering households which have been approved for more than a year. Therefore, the agency has not satisfied itself as to the carers' ongoing skills and suitability.

The agency has not ensured that carers receive training tailored to meet the needs of the children they care for. The agency is now supporting carers to achieve their training and development standards. However, none of the fostering households completed these within the first year of approval. The lack of suitable tailored training has undermined carers' ability to meet children's needs.

The systems for maintaining and storing records are not effective. Sometimes, it is difficult for staff to swiftly access accurate and up-to-date information. There is a lack of attention to detail in some records. Some records are, on occasion, wrongly dated or the information is cut and pasted from another document. One foster carer agreement contained several different dates of approval.

The manager has reviewed some policies since joining the agency. However, some other policies do not provide staff and carers with clear information and guidance as they continue to contain inaccurate and out-of-date information.

The quality of panel minutes has improved since the last inspection. However, there remains a lack of clarity in demonstrating how suitability decisions are reached. Furthermore, the agency decision-maker is not always provided with panel minutes promptly. This has undermined their ability to make decisions and swiftly inform new carers in writing of their approval. As a result of administrative delays, one carer did not receive their written approval until the day that a foster child moved in.

Further panel training is planned to ensure that panel members have a shared understanding of fostering, the functions of panel and their role as panel members. Not all panel members have been provided with an opportunity to observe a fostering panel meeting before becoming a full panel member.

The staff feel well supported and benefit from suitable supervision, support and management guidance. Although some staff continue to require training and support to fulfil all aspects of their roles, there are plans to address this.

There remain several shortfalls. However, the manager has driven positive change and is leading the agency's improvement.

# 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>Subject to paragraph 6, 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 that foster carers understand and implement the model of care, and understand the importance of informing the agency of relevant changes to their lives and the fostering households.</p>	16 May 2022
<p>The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which—</p> <p>is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and</p> <p>sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that foster carers understand their responsibilities should a child make a disclosure about person in a position of trust. Ensure that risk assessments and safer caring plans are sufficiently detailed and clear, and that actions identified to safeguard children are completed.</p> <p>This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	16 May 2022
<p>The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that foster carers receive training in keeping children safe online and targeted training specifically relevant to the identified needs of children placed with them.</p>	25 July 2022

<p>This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	
<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.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless 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) (3))</p> <p>This requirement was raised at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	<p>16 May 2022</p>
<p>The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation.</p> <p>A review must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the fostering service provider consider it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year. (Regulation 28 (1) (2))</p>	<p>27 June 2022</p>

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers' homes are free of avoidable hazards, in keeping with family life. ('Volume 4', paragraph 3.82)
- The registered person should ensure that on each occasion a child goes missing, the fostering agency requests that the placing authority carries out a return home interview to help children understand the dangers and risks of leaving the foster home without permission, and where they can access help if they consider running away. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 5.8)
- The registered person should ensure that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the main issues and views expressed by panel members. Minutes should reflect the reasons for recommendation and be sent to the agency decision-maker swiftly to allow them to make timely decisions. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.7)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers evidence that the training, support and development standards have been attained within 12 months of approval. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.3)

- The registered person should ensure that policies and procedures are accurate and updated regularly. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.10)
- The registered person should ensure that all persons joining the central list of persons considered suitable to be fostering panel members are provided with an opportunity to observe a fostering panel meeting. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 23.8)
- The registered person should ensure that staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There should be a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping and action taken when needed. ('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:** 2551006

**Registered provider:** Flowers Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** AW House, 6-8 Stuart Street, Luton, Bedfordshire  
LU1 2SJ

**Responsible individual:** Umer Ahmed

**Registered manager:** Biri Yaya

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## **Inspector**

Joanna Heller, Social Care Inspector



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