

Integrated Fostering Services Ltd

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Unit 3, Pavilion Business Centre, 1st Floor, 6 Kinetic Crescent, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 7FJ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned independent fostering agency based in Enfield. The service offers the following types of foster care placements: short term, bridging, respite, emergency, and solo and sibling placements. Additionally, the service offers foster care placements for parent and child and asylum-seeking children and targeted care placements.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since 11 May 2018 and completed the required management course in December 2018.

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.

A monitoring visit was carried out on 9 September 2021. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 21 to 25 March 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: 22 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

Many children have lived with their foster families for several years. The matching of children with their foster carers is good. The agency is proactive in ensuring that all relevant information is obtained before any decision is made about a child being placed with foster carers. The use of current government initiatives informs learning and improves practice, for example improvements to the matching and suitability of placements. This has created a sense of curiosity for staff. As a result, children have stability, permanence and improved life chances.

Children's achievements are celebrated. Each month, a child receives a certificate and is named star of the month. This could be for their attainment at school or securing a place at college or university. However, progress reports for children are not always shared with local authorities in a timely way. This means that children's progress cannot be measured or fully documented and there is a risk of children's achievements being omitted from their records.

Foster carers receive a wide range of support from enthusiastic children's champions. Foster carers told inspectors that supervising social workers and managers provide them with practical and emotional support. For example, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, staff and foster carers continued to meet virtually on a regular basis. As a result, foster carers increased their network of support enabling them to share experiences, skills and knowledge.

The foster carers' handbook is detailed, concise and explains necessary processes and legislation well. Foster carers reported that this is a useful and helpful document which is reviewed with their input and views. Newly approved foster carers can read and refer to the foster carers' handbook throughout their fostering journey to assist them in successful care planning for the children they care for.

Children's cultural and identity needs are promoted. The diverse staff team and proactive foster carers support children of all faiths to attend religious gatherings and celebrations. As a result, children can explore their own views, and their religious and cultural needs are met.

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

Children are supported by committed and passionate support workers that provide time and patience to listen to them. This helps to build trusting relationships. Information and feedback received from children is shared with the whole team and their foster carers. This enables a consistent approach to the care provided to children. Children told the inspectors that their life would be different without the agency staff and carers. For example, information relating to children being involved in county lines and gang-related activity was shared with all agency staff and carers. As a result, the risk of children being criminalised has reduced and their life chances have increased.

Children have plentiful opportunities to voice their concerns and opinions. The children's guide is age appropriate. For example, younger children have a guide which is explained using pictures and the agency's mascot. The older children's information is specific to their age range. The children's guide assures children that they can complain or raise issues with the appropriate person without fear or prejudice.

Children are supported to take age-appropriate and suitably assessed risk. For example, some children have access to mobile phones and travel independently to spend time with their friends and family. This enables children to keep in contact with their foster carers when they are away from the home and builds their independence and confidence.

Children rarely go missing from care. This is because they are settled and have good relationships with their foster carers. When children do not return at the agreed time, foster carers are prompt in following the missing from care process. Outside of office hours, there is an effective on-call system. This ensures that foster carers and children have access to support from the agency at all times.

Risk assessments are good quality and are reviewed and updated regularly. However, not all supervising social workers know and understand the risks and life experiences of the children placed with the agency foster carers. Although this does not affect the foster carer's ability to safeguard the children, the foster carer may not have all of the necessary information to ensure that risks are managed effectively. However, there is good oversight of the children by the team around them. As a result, the risk of harm to children is significantly reduced.

All foster carers have completed their mandatory training. They also receive training in specialist areas such as suicide ideation and self-harm. This ensures that foster carers are equipped to manage the needs of children who may require additional support with their mental health.

Unannounced home visits to foster carers' homes promote the children's safety and well-being. Any concerns are followed up and considered by managers. This ensures that children live in a safe environment.

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

Throughout the inspection, there was significant delay in inspectors receiving the requested documents and information. There is a sense of chaos in the agency's day-to-day function and environment. Nonetheless, inspectors spoke to staff who are passionate and committed and staff morale is strong.

In the absence of the responsible individual, senior managers are supporting the registered manager. Since the previous inspection, there has been a high turnover of staff. Poor performance is addressed and managed well. Recording of this is

detailed. However, tasks are not followed up, for example when supervising social workers address incomplete tasks with foster carers. As a result, there is delay and drift in addressing actions.

The managers' quality assurance tools are not sufficiently robust and fail to identify shortfalls such as poor recording. Senior managers regularly review progress and the agency's function; however, there is no formal recording of this. Consequently, the monitoring and review systems are not effective.

Leaders and managers are responsive to concerns raised by external agencies. Prompt action is taken in relation to allegations. Reports and internal investigations are thorough and well managed. Foster carers said they were fully supported by the agency. As a result, children's stability is secured.

Ofsted has not been notified of all serious events in line with regulation. This is a missed opportunity to evidence the positive and proactive work of the agency in relation to safeguarding children and supporting foster carers. In addition, this prevents the regulator from having a thorough oversight of the agency.

Staff and foster carers receive practice-related supervision. Foster carers report that the sessions offer them challenge and support. However, there is delay and drift in the completion of tasks identified at supervision sessions.

The agency's fostering panel is effective. Panel members are guided by an experienced and passionate chairperson. Decision-making is recorded well, and decisions are child focused and realistic. Annual appraisals of foster carers are productive and thorough. This means that foster carers continue to provide informed, experienced and compassionate care to children.

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 fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate training, supervision, and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))	30 June 2022
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 table. (Regulation 36 (1))	30 June 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the service and ensuring the quality of the service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.1)

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: SC400955

Registered provider: Integrated Fostering Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Unit 3 Pavilions Business Centre, 6 Kinetic Crescent, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 7FJ

Responsible individual: Sarah Ferguson

Registered manager: Janice Darling

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Inspectors

Suzy Lemmy, Social Care Inspector
Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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