

# Community Foster Care

Community Foster Care

Unit A, Kingsholm Mews, Kingsholm Road, Gloucester GL1 3BD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework.

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is operated by an independent, not-for-profit charity. It recruits, assesses and supports foster carers who provide short-term, long-term and parent- and child-fostering placements.

The agency currently works with 38 fostering households. The manager was registered with Ofsted in 2021.

### Inspection dates: 13 to 16 June 2022

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>good</b>
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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	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 22 October 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 make very good progress in all areas of their lives. There is a sense of community and purpose in the agency. This motivates the foster carers and staff to be aspirational for children. A strong ethos of therapeutic parenting ensures that children feel valued and loved. As a result, children who have previously struggled to form and sustain attachments, develop strong and enduring relationships with their foster carers. These relationships form the basis from which the children make progress.

Children are very much part of their foster carer's family and children's voices are heard and valued. For example, children form strong attachments with the foster carers' birth children and go on holidays as a family. Foster carers strongly advocate for children to enable them to obtain the services they need, such as health and therapeutic services. Children are often able to 'stay put' when they reach 18, until they feel ready to leave home and live independently.

Children make progress educationally and are placed in suitable educational placements. Some children progress to university. Supervising social workers and foster carers promote the value of attending education and support children effectively by attending open evenings and educational meetings. The agency funds additional tutoring and driving lessons, so that children can reach their full educational potential.

The physical and emotional health care needs of children are met. Children benefit from vigilant and caring foster carers, who ensure that they receive the health services they need. For example, if needed, children receive therapy from the agency's therapist, using innovative therapeutic approaches, or receive support to attend the opticians and dental appointments.

Unplanned endings are minimal due to careful matching procedures. If there is an unplanned ending, a comprehensive review takes place to inform learning and development. Good quality assessments of prospective foster carers are of a timely manner and evaluative, offer the fostering panel the information that they need to make a recommendation about a prospective foster carer's suitability to foster.

Foster carers benefit from a comprehensive programme of training. For example, therapeutic parenting, first aid, and equality and diversity training. This training equips foster carers with the skills and knowledge that they need to care for children effectively. The agency is committed to addressing social inequality through raising awareness and enhanced self-awareness, particularly in relation to equality and diversity.

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

Children report that they feel safe and secure living with their foster carers. There is an effective and prompt response from the agency when there are concerns about a foster carer or child. Foster carers and the staff know the children well and are vigilant to any changes in a child's behaviour that may indicate they are worried or upset. Foster carers and staff promptly report any concerns to safeguarding professionals.

Foster carers and the staff benefit from regular safeguarding training and are confident about the action they need to take if they have a safeguarding concern about a child. Any safeguarding incidents are evaluated for learning and this learning is implemented in to agency practice.

If a child goes missing, foster carers follow a comprehensive missing from home procedure. There is a curiosity to find out where a child has been, who they have been with and what they have been doing. A return home interview is always undertaken when the child has returned home.

Recruitment processes for staff are robust and ensure that only suitable people are employed. Rigorous checks of foster carers are undertaken prior to their approval. Health and safety checks are undertaken of a foster carer's home, and again at their annual review, to ensure that their home remains a safe place for a child to live. However, a small number of annual reviews are overdue and have not been completed within timescales.

Foster carers and staff know the children well and know what to do to keep children safe. However, the quality of safer caring plans is variable. Some are too generic and are not individualised. Information about a child is contained in different documents. This means that foster carers do not have one concise document to refer to, that details a child's needs and how these needs will be safely met.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The agency has experienced recent challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions. There has been a merger of the North and South regions of the agency, and a high turnover of staff. The responses of leaders and managers have been timely and effective. For example, foster carers have been assessed and supported virtually through re COVID-19 restrictions which has been effective.

The trustees are appropriately skilled and experienced and provide effective and robust oversight and scrutiny. They are undertaking innovative projects. For example, they are linking with a university to produce a video that will inform teacher training about the needs of looked after children in education.

Supervising social worker visits to foster carers are regularly undertaken and generally provide appropriate levels of challenge and scrutiny. However, the views of children are not regularly gained during visits. Foster carers do not always submit their logs in a timely manner, so that supervising social workers are able to closely

monitor the progress and the quality of the care that children are receiving from their foster carer.

Management oversight is evident in records and documents. Staff and foster carers report that they feel valued and how leaders and managers are open to learning and approachable. Quality assurance processes and an outcome tracker are in place to aid management monitoring. However, the use of data from the outcome trackers are not always effective. Documented evidence of a child's progress is hard to find although professionals and foster carers report and can give clear examples that a child has made very good progress.

The staff benefit from regular supervision and training that is focused on the needs, experiences and plans of foster carers. The quality of supervision records is variable. The progress that staff are making in meeting actions set are not always documented in the following session.

The diverse fostering panel meets regularly and provides a good quality service, including a quality monitoring function. Panel minutes provide evidence of why recommendations are being made. However, they do not always comprehensively document and explore an applicant's vulnerabilities and how these have been explored and resolved. The agency decision maker makes clear, safe and suitable decisions about an applicant's suitability to foster.

The panel chair produces a generally comprehensive annual report to aid the agency's development and strategic plan. The quality of assessments is evaluated at each panel. However, this evaluation is not documented in the annual report.

## 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 registered person must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation. A review must take place not more than a year after approval, and thereafter whenever the foster service provider considers it necessary, but at intervals of not more than a year. (Regulation 28(1)(2))	2 August 2022

### Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that all foster carers are aware of all the necessary information about a child's circumstances, including any significant events, to help the foster carer understand and predict the child's needs and behaviours, and support the child within their household. The fostering service follows up with the responsible authority where all such information has not been provided by the authority. This relates to ensuring that all information is contained in one easily referenced document that is kept up to date and details the aims of the placement, the child's needs, how these needs will be met and timescales. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare is promoted in all fostering placements. This relates to ensuring that foster carers receive vulnerable adults training if they care for children post-18 years or undertaken parent and child fostering placements. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 4.1)
- The registered person should ensure that panel minutes are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation. This relates to ensuring that panel minutes document the applicant's strengths and vulnerabilities, and it is documented that the identified vulnerabilities have been explored and resolved. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 14.7)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision records detail the time, date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person.

This specifically refers to ensuring that actions raised at the previous supervision have been addressed and that this is documented. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 24.5)

- The registered person should ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the agency's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. This relates to ensuring that prompt action is taken if foster carer logs are not regularly received by the agency as agreed. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 25.2).

## **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:** SC035415

**Registered provider:** Community Foster Care

**Registered provider address:** Unit A, Kingsholm Mews, Kingsholm Road,  
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**Responsible individual:** Mark Kingston

**Registered manager:** Emma Weaver

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## **Inspectors**

Tina Maddison, Social Care Inspector

Louise Bacon, Social Care Inspector

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