

# Capstone Foster Care

Capstone Foster Care (North) Limited

1st Floor Longford House, Hall Street, Heywood, Lancashire OL10 1DP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Capstone Foster Care (North) is a branch of a privately run national fostering agency. It has offices in Heywood, Bradford and Barnsley. The agency offers a range of foster placements, including long-term, short-term, short breaks, parent and child and therapeutic foster care placements for children from birth up to the age of 18.

At the time of the inspection, the agency was supporting 116 children and 88 fostering households.

The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2021.

The inspection involved both on-site and off-site activity. Children and foster carers were spoken to during the inspection.

### Inspection dates: 7 to 11 November 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of last inspection:** 18 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children are at the core of this agency. They receive care that is aspirational, individualised and child-centred, and are empowered to achieve excellent outcomes and make exceptional progress in most areas of their lives.

Foster carers and agency staff demonstrate that they genuinely care about the children. Children know this, and value the impact these relationships have on them. One child said, 'They are just brilliant. Anything they can do to help, they just do. I don't even know where to start. They have just been brilliant and help me in so many ways.'

Children are listened to. Foster carers and staff engage children creatively and consult them about their care. Children's ambassador roles have been created to ensure that children's voices are embedded in practice across the agency. Their views regularly contribute to the wider development of the agency.

The agency has a strong family feel. Children, carers and staff feel connected and are extremely proud to be part of the agency. The agency has developed effective ways of communicating with all children and carers, helping them to feel included and informed. Foster carers receive exceptional levels of support and feel highly valued. One carer said, 'They care about us and the children. You are never on your own.'

Foster carers recognise the transformative effect that the agency's research-based specialist therapeutic service has on the children they care for. Carers said that the service had supported them to improve the care they offered to children, providing them with greater insight into children's behaviours and how to respond in ways that are helpful to the child. Foster carers and placing authority social workers also recognise that following the input of this service, children become more emotionally resilient and are in a better place to overcome previous life traumas. Older children credit their care with changing their lives. One child told the inspector, 'The social workers and carers are amazing. They all work together as a team and I owe them the world. Together, they have all helped me in so many ways. They have changed my life.'

The agency has implemented robust processes to ensure that children live with foster carers who can meet their needs. Children are welcomed into their foster families and are enabled to develop a sense of belonging. Where possible, the agency supports children to live with their siblings and helps children to stay with their carers post-18. As a result of the impressive 'stickability' and resilience demonstrated by the agency's foster carers, children's placements rarely end in an unplanned way.

Family relationships are supported. Children are helped to keep in touch with people who are important to them. Foster carers regularly support children's time with their families, helping to strengthen relationships that children can continue to benefit from as they move into adulthood.

Children and foster carers benefit from access to the agency's innovative and responsive support service. Children's individual achievements are regularly celebrated by the agency. Children's individuality is nurtured and embraced. Cultural events enable children to learn about their own and other cultures. The agency provides a variety of activities on a regular basis that offer children opportunities to have fun.

The education support team provides a valuable service to supplement children's learning. Children are encouraged to be aspirational in their learning and are supported to achieve their goals. Older children are supported to attend higher education and gain employment.

Children's health needs are exceptionally well understood. Foster carers and staff are vigilant and responsive to children's health needs. Foster carers have access to specialist training as required to meet the children's individual needs. There is ongoing liaison with professionals, and the agency will raise appropriate challenge to ensure that children's needs are being met.

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

A highly effective safeguarding culture underpins practice across the agency. Children say they are happy and feel safe living with their foster carers. Other professionals are highly complimentary about the care children receive and know they are safe.

Staff are professionally curious. They see children on a regular basis and ensure that children know who to talk to if they have any concerns. They are vigilant to risks for all children and regularly review and reflect on their practice.

Highly effective risk and behaviour management plans clearly identify children's risks and vulnerabilities. They provide clear strategies for carers to follow to keep children safe. The agency regularly goes above and beyond to manage potential risks. However, on occasion, opportunities to clearly record the action they have taken to minimise risk have been missed.

Leaders and managers have excellent oversight of investigations into serious incidents, allegations and complaints. All investigations are dealt with robustly, in line with statutory guidance, and shared with appropriate agencies.

The agency provided exceptionally high levels of support to children, foster carers and staff following a significant safeguarding incident. They worked in partnership with statutory agencies and swiftly implemented any learning to further strengthen safeguarding practices across the agency.

The number of incidents of children going missing from their foster homes or engaging in high-risk behaviours is low. When incidents do occur, foster carers know how to respond.

Children's behaviour is well managed by their foster carers. Foster carers have access to specialist support as required to develop their understanding of children's behaviours and experiences. When necessary, the agency supports families to secure specialist packages of support with their multi-agency therapy team.

Safe recruitment practices are in place for staff, panel members and foster carers to ensure the suitability of these people to work with or care for children. Recruitment practices are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain robust. Appropriate checks and references are undertaken during assessments of prospective foster carers. Assessment reports are comprehensive and analytical, enabling clear, objective approval decisions to be made in required timescales.

The agency has implemented robust procedures to ensure that statutory checks to safeguard children are in place. However, on one occasion prior to these changes being implemented, opportunities to challenge and verify information were missed and had not been accurately recorded in a carer's recent review. Although this did not directly impact on children, it reduced the oversight of the carer's support network.

Foster carer reviews and supervisions reflect appropriate challenge. Records completed by foster carers are detailed and are regularly reviewed by supervising social workers. Prior to the inspection, managers took action to address shortfalls in records for one foster carer. However, these shortfalls had been ongoing for some time and opportunities to address this issue sooner had been missed.

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

Changes in leadership and management since the last inspection have been well managed. The registered manager has a wealth of experience and knowledge. She is aspirational and inspirational in her leadership style and is held in exceptionally high regard by children, foster carers, staff and other professionals.

The manager is supported by a newly appointed responsible individual, new team managers and wider leadership team. The leadership team is highly visible. They maintain frequent contact with children, foster carers and staff to continually review and develop practice.

The leadership team has high expectations of staff and foster carers, and is ambitious for children. The team recognises the agency's strengths and proactively addresses areas for development. The leadership team is committed to developing the service to continually improve outcomes for children.

Clear monitoring systems enable managers to recognise patterns and trends and to take appropriate action as required. They are continuing to develop their strategic oversight of the fostering business to ensure that opportunities to showcase the work they are doing are not missed.

The fostering panel is diverse and inclusive. Panel members have a wide range of experiences relevant to fostering. The new agency decision-maker is highly effective at providing appropriate challenge and scrutiny to ensure robust decision-making.

Excellent communication with partner agencies is a key strength across the agency. Regular consultation with key professionals ensures that children's needs are being met.

## **What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that reviews of foster carers' approvals are sufficiently thorough and contain up-to-date and relevant information. ('Fostering service: national minimum standards', 13.8)
- The registered person should ensure that areas of concern, or need for additional support, that are identified between reviews are addressed in a timely manner. ('Fostering service: national minimum standards', 13.9)
- The registered person should ensure that entries in records, decisions and reasons for them, are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information. ('Fostering service: national minimum standards', 26.5)

### **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:** SC065333

**Registered provider:** Capstone Foster Care (North) Limited

**Registered provider address:** Beech House, Wootton St Lawrence, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG23 8PE

**Responsible individual:** Debbie Tomlinson

**Registered manager:** Beverley Maymond

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## Inspectors

Caroline Bertram, Social Care Inspector

Pauline Yates, Social Care Inspector

Sarah Oldham, Social Care Inspector

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