

SWAP Foster Care

Social Work Assessment Partners Limited

43-47 Kings Street, Bedworth, Warwickshire CV12 8NB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately run fostering agency provides short- and long-term foster placements and parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency was providing care for 65 children and one parent. The agency had 34 households.

Inspection dates: 14 to 18 November 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 **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 19 April 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

This independent fostering agency had a full inspection by Ofsted on 19 April 2021. As a result of the visit, a compliance notice was issued under regulation 11. Ofsted conducted a monitoring visit on 21 July 2021 to review the action taken by the provider to meet the compliance notice.

During the visit, further shortfalls were identified, and compliance notices were issued under regulation 8, regulation 11 and regulation 20. Ofsted undertook a further monitoring visit on 9 September 2021 to review the action taken by the provider to meet the compliance notices.

Inspectors found that leaders and managers had rectified the shortfalls and implemented appropriate systems and safeguarding measures. As a result, Ofsted

deemed compliance notices under regulation 8, regulation 11 and regulation 20 as met. In addition, all previous requirements were met.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Foster carers build good relationships with children. Children are happy, settled and receiving good care within their foster families. Some children have remained with their foster families through a 'staying put' arrangement, providing children with stability, consistent care, and a stronger support network into adulthood.

Children make progress as a result of good matching with their foster carers and well-planned care. Where possible, children will meet their carers before moving into the home. When this isn't possible, children are provided with information about their carers and their new home to help them feel at ease. However, the matching process could be improved by the agency when considering the impact of the placement on existing children in the home.

Children are supported by foster carers to maintain relationships with people that are important to them. Foster carers readily facilitate and support children to see their families. Consequently, relationships between children, their families and carers are improved.

Parent and child foster placements have been successful in supporting parents to care for their children. As a result, children have remained in their parents' care. For one parent, the support has been so successful that the local authority hopes the carers can continue to support the parent and child longer term. One parent shared that they have learned a lot and that the placement has been 'amazing'.

Children make good progress educationally, emotionally, socially and with their health. One child has shared that they are so happy and settled in their new home their anxious tics have stopped. Other children have been supported to attend university, apprenticeships, and increase their time in school. Carers welcome children's friends into their home to support children's social relationships. Children are supported to reach their milestones and appropriate levels of independence. Carers and staff have high aspirations for children, and advocate to ensure that they receive their rights and entitlements.

Children enjoy activity events with carers and foster agency staff, such as the Christmas party, bowling and the summer picnic in the park. This helps to promote positive relationships with children, carers and staff.

Children engage in a range of after-school activities in relation to their hobbies and interests, such as joining a SEND football team, attending cadets, the youth club and swimming lessons. Carers take children on day trips to theme parks and attractions, and some children have been on holidays abroad. These moments are celebrated by the carers and the agency and form part of the 'SWAP family' newsletter. The agency sends children certificates of achievement to support self-esteem and recognition of their abilities.

Children are regularly consulted to share their views, wishes and feelings with supervising social workers and in preparation for important meetings about children's lives. When children do not wish to attend these meetings themselves, carers and supervising social workers advocate on children's behalf.

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

The children's guide informs children how to make a complaint and seek advocacy support. Consequently, children know how to make a complaint and can identify people they are happy to talk to. Children's guides are tailored to children's individual abilities and understanding.

The agency deals with allegations in a timely manner. The manager shares information with relevant agencies and ensures appropriate safeguarding of children when concerns are raised. The manager is proactive at dealing with concerns over the weekend when other services are closed. Where practices have fallen short of the required standards of care, there is appropriate oversight and decision-making by the panel.

Children rarely go missing from home. When children do go missing, they receive well-coordinated responses. Carers actively look for children and inform the relevant professionals to reduce the risk to children.

When children's placements have broken down, the agency works quickly to support children to be placed with alternative internal carers where possible. The staff recognise the emotional impact placement breakdowns have on children. As a result, staff go over and above to ensure that children feel happy in their new placement. This has included the manager visiting children at the weekend and taking them out for meals, and a member of the admin team who is known to children video-calling them to check in on them. Consequently, children are supported by a staff team that knows them well, and children's wishes and feelings are sought.

Children who require additional help and support with language receive this from carers who are suitably trained. Some carers and staff are trained in the use of communication tools. This has supported one child to verbally communicate, and is having a positive impact on their development.

Carers attend a range of training to help them support and understand children's needs. This includes Secure Base Model, understanding attachment, safeguarding, and specialist training linked to children's individual needs. Where concerns have arisen regarding internet safety, carers and children have been supported to access a range of targeted training. A recent training event held by one of the supervising social workers regarding being safe online received excellent feedback from the carers, who felt more able to deal with issues that children currently face from being online as a result.

The agency is also supporting important people connected to the carers to undertake relevant training. The agency recognises the importance of people involved in children's lives having the relevant training to help support them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has worked for the agency for several years, and she has applied to Ofsted to be the registered manager. She is knowledgeable about the agency, children, carers and staff, and has been key in moving the agency forward with positive changes.

The manager has worked hard since the last inspection to improve practice and implement systems to help her oversee the quality of care that children receive. The manager understands the agency's strengths and areas of development. As a result, she has improved the quality of the service the agency offers to children, carers and staff.

Staff are well supported. They receive effective inductions, supervisions and training to support them in their role. Staff say they feel well supported by the manager and each other. One staff member shared, 'I enjoy being in an environment that encourages development, reflection and growth.'

The manager feels well supported in her role. She is now supervised by the responsible individual. As a result, the responsible individual has a better oversight of the agency, including the strengths and areas of development.

Team meetings are held regularly for staff, and the senior managers attend these. There is emphasis on the progress children are making and an allocated slot for staff to share practice-based learning. Consequently, staff know children well and use disseminated learning to help support their practice.

Foster carers feel well supported by the agency. They share that they are able to contact the agency, and whoever they speak with will know them and the children placed with them and be able to help them. Carers have shared that the staff are 'incredibly supportive', have a 'personal touch' and are child focused.

The agency's panel is diverse and offers a wealth of experience and knowledge. The panel chair shared that supervising social workers complete assessments to a high standard. There is evidence of professional curiosity and challenge among panel members where necessary. This helps strengthen the agency's safeguarding processes.

Managers and staff have good relationships with professionals. Professionals have shared that children are thriving in their placements, and that they benefit from good communication with staff. One local authority commissioner shared that the agency is often their 'first port of call' when looking to place children with carers.

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>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>This particularly refers to ensuring that staff understand and implement the agency policy regarding new partners in a foster home</p>	18 January 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that they have considered the impact of the placement on existing household members. (Fostering Services: national minimum standards, page 23, paragraph 15.1).

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: SC409413

Registered provider: Social Work Assessment Partners Ltd

Registered provider address: Mitre House, School Road, Bulkingtn, Bedworth,
Warwickshire CV12 9JB

Responsible individual: Lorraine Walker

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 02476 617774

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Inspector

Jodie Lewis, Social Care Inspector

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