

Ikon Fostering Limited

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Ikon Fostering Ltd, Pool Street, Walsall WS1 2EN

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Ikon Fostering is a private limited company based in Walsall. The agency was registered in December 2014. The agency provides a range of fostering placements, including long-term, short-term, emergency, parent and child, and respite placements.

At the time of this inspection, there were 106 fostering households.

Ikon Fostering has two registered managers. One registered manager has been in post since October 2017 and the other registered manager has been in post since April 2022. Both are qualified social workers and an experienced managers

Inspection dates: 28 November 2022 to 2 December 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	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 10 June 2019

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 enjoy trusted and meaningful relationships with their foster carers. Carers know the children well and provide nurturing care in line with their needs. One child gave the inspectors a 'thumbs up' when asked about his foster family. Another child told the inspectors that they 'loved everything about their foster family'. These positive relationships help children to feel secure.

Overall, children have stable and long-term placements, which provide them with a sense of stability and permanence. The agency seeks to keep families together, and over half of the children at the agency live with their siblings. In one example, a foster carer has exceeded her numbers to ensure that a sibling group can remain together. This enables children to maintain strong family links.

Foster carers understand and meet children's health needs. Carers manage children's health plans effectively, including those children with complex health needs. Children are supported to attend all routine and specialist health appointments.

Children are making progress with their education. Foster carers advocate for children to ensure that they receive the right education in line with their needs. For one child who is now in mainstream education, this is a remarkable achievement for this child.

A strength of the agency is its therapeutic parenting model of care. Supervising social workers and foster carers are supported by the in-house psychotherapist, who provides bespoke therapeutic input to help children regulate their emotions safely while making sense of their earlier lived experiences. As a result, children are making positive progress from their starting points.

Children participate in several activities, such as drama club, football and swimming. The agency holds several events such as summer and Christmas parties. These events are well attended and enjoyed by all. Children also enjoy being part of the agency's children's group, where monthly activities are undertaken. One child told the inspectors that they love being part of the group. These experiences provide children with enjoyable opportunities and help them to develop their social skills.

There have been significant improvements with the matching process and, overall, the matching documents are thorough and match children effectively to their carers. There are occasions when these documents do not contain all the required information; however, there has been minimal impact for children.

A small number of children have moved placements in an unplanned way. When this has occurred, the agency has supported the children to ensure that there is a smooth transition. Following an unplanned ending, the in-house psychotherapist completes a reflective piece of work that supports the agency to put in place

effective strategies to reduce the number of unplanned endings. Positively, following this piece of work, the agency has seen a reduction in its unplanned endings.

The use of a camera in a fostering household has not been included in the risk assessment or safer care plan. Consequently, the agency is unable to ensure that the use and review of this camera are appropriate.

The agency is not consistent in supporting carers to prepare children for moving on to independence. Children are not always supported to develop their confidence or learn the skills they need to be more independent. When required, the agency does not challenge the local authorities to ensure that children have the right support. For example, the inspectors noted that one child had not been allocated a personal adviser, despite the child reaching the age of 17 and half. This does not support children to prepare for adulthood.

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

Children feel safe living with their carers. Foster carers understand risk for children and they are proactive in keeping children safe. They attend relevant training that helps them to further understand the risks associated outside of the foster family home, such as child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. As a result, the carers are equipped with the knowledge to keep children safe.

Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in missing from care episodes for children. When children go missing from their homes, foster carers follow plans and share information in a timely way, and proactively address any concerns about children going missing. Discussions with placing authorities and other professionals, alongside the input from the agency's missing from care and exploitation lead, increase children safety.

When children make allegations, these are promptly referred to the local authority designated officer and other professionals, to promote the safety and welfare of children. Where there are concerns, investigations are completed, with recommendations taken back to an early foster carer review and to panel to inform decision-making about the carer's continued approval.

Foster carer assessments are detailed and thorough. Supervising and independent social workers ensure that all information is considered before recommendations are made. The assessments provide clear analysis and recommendations for panel, and recommendations by the panel for approval are well considered.

The registered managers have effective oversight of any safeguarding issues. These issues are regularly tracked, with managers and leaders ensuring that children and carers are receiving the support that they need.

Recruitment of carers and staff is vigorous. There is management oversight of recruitment, which helps to ensure that only safe adults provide care and support to children.

Safer care plans for foster carer households are not always updated to reflect changes within the household, or following recommendations from panel. This does not ensure that current risk factors are known and does not ensure that effective strategies are proportionate to reduced risk.

Supervising social workers carry out two unannounced visits to each fostering household every year. However, supervising social workers do not always ensure that children are spoken to alone or their bedrooms are seen. This hinders opportunities to explore if children are safe and happy.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is experienced and suitably qualified for the role. She is passionate and committed to creating the right environment for staff. Staff talk positively about working for the agency and welcome the support they receive from the managers. This level of support has contributed to high staff retention, and the stability of the staff team is a strength of the agency.

The registered manager has a good understanding of the agency's strengths and areas of development. She has good monitoring systems in place. These include regular monthly manager meetings, which are effective in providing an overview of the agency and identifying and addressing any shortfalls.

Staff receive regular supervision. The supervision provides staff with the opportunities for reflective discussions about practice and case complexities. Staff have access to a good range of relevant and good-quality training that enables them to improve their knowledge and practice, and to support the foster carers and children effectively.

Foster carers receive a good level of support. They benefit from regular support groups and supervision visits. Supervisions are of a good quality, they support the carers' well-being, identifies training needs, and leads to quality care for children. Foster carers spoke highly of the support they receive. One carer described the support she receives as 'impeccable', with another carer describing the agency as being 'fantastic'.

Panel members are suitably recruited and qualified. Panel appraisals take place as required. Panel minutes are detailed and reflect panel discussions, with a clear recommendation. Furthermore, the agency decision-maker makes clear, timely and reasoned decisions, demonstrating a good level of reflection and consideration of all elements of the application and approval process.

The agency's partnership working with the professional network benefits children. Overall, the children's social workers gave very positive feedback about the communication with the agency, the professionalism of staff and the skills of foster 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 fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that—</p> <p>no child placed with a foster parent is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable. (Regulation 13 (1) (2)(b))</p> <p>This specifically relates to the use of closed-circuit cameras being used in a carer's home and this not being fully explored by the agency.</p>	16 January 2023

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the service implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. Specifically, that safer care plans are reviewed and updated to contain the relevant information regarding the child's specific needs, and clear strategies for the foster carers to follow. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 14, paragraph 4.5)
- The registered person should ensure that there are comprehensive arrangements for preparing and supporting young people to make the transition to independence. This includes appropriate training and support to foster carers caring for young people who are approaching adulthood. Arrangements are consistent with the young person's care plan, including their placement plan and pathway plan. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 25, paragraph 12.3)
- The registered person should ensure that each approved foster carer is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer, including at least one unannounced visit a year. Meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, while taking into account the child's

wishes and feelings. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 43, paragraph 21.8)

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: SC486357

Registered provider: Ikon Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Coton Lane, Birmingham B23 6TP

Responsible individual: Shiv Pattni

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Inspectors

Lydia Isaac, Social Care Inspector

Fiona Roche, Social Care Inspector

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