

Soundly Fostering

Charles Burrell Centre Ltd, Charles Burrell Centre, Staniforth Road, Thetford IP24 3LH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency provides short-term, long-term and parent-and-child placements. The agency registered with Ofsted in January 2022.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had nine approved fostering households and 15 children being cared for by foster carers. The foster carers live in Norfolk and Suffolk.

The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2022.

Inspection dates: 30 January to 3 February 2023

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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This agency approved its first foster carers in April 2022. Foster carers feel valued and exceptionally well supported by a dedicated team. Many foster carers talked about the 'family feel' to this agency.

Most foster carers are experienced. Some carers have transferred to this agency with the children that they have looked after for years. These children are an integral part of their foster family. Some young people 'stay put'. The agency's thoughtful approach to matching helps to ensure that new children live with resilient families who are well equipped to love and care for them.

Children move to live with their foster carers in a planned way. This allows time for pre-placement meetings and the opportunity for foster carers to gather additional information from the local authority. The children are flourishing.

Placement endings are few and heartfelt. On one occasion, after significant consideration and consultation with the children and the local authority, one child moved from their foster home. The child remained with the agency, moving to an experienced family that was better placed to meet the child's individual needs. The result for this child is that they are thriving. This bespoke, careful, professional child-centred work with children and their network helps to reduce the emotional effect of placement moves and helps children to build their confidence and self-esteem.

The agency staff and foster carers work exceptionally well together to help and support the children. All children are in education. The agency and foster carers advocate well to ensure that any child who is having difficulty in sustaining education receives additional help from the agency and the professionals involved in their care. This helps to reduce barriers to learning and helps children to reach their educational potential.

All children are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians. Foster carers have access to tailored therapeutic support as and when needed. All children enjoy a range of healthy activities such as swimming, horse riding and after-school clubs. The agency activity days provide an additional opportunity for children to have fun with one another and to get to know the staff. Children feel respected and cherished.

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

Children feel safe and welcomed into their foster carer's home and the extended foster family. Children trust their foster carers.

The transferring, prospective foster carer and back-up carer assessments are thorough and good quality. The written assessments evidence an in-depth knowledge and understanding of foster carers' circumstances and analysis of their

motivation to foster. The professionally diverse foster panel is led by an experienced panel chair. The foster panel offers the agency good levels of professional scrutiny and feedback about the assessments. This enables the highly experienced agency decision-maker to make thorough approval decisions. The plans for the first set of carer annual reviews are actively in progress. This detailed, proficient scrutiny and oversight ensure that individuals and their families are suitable to care for vulnerable children.

There have been no allegations, complaints or concerns about the standards of care provided to children. Staff and managers have ensured that the systems are ready to deal with any cause for concern. There have been few safeguarding incidents directly involving children. Children rarely go missing from foster care because foster carers take swift and meaningful action to ensure that children are where they should be.

Unannounced visits have begun. Supervising social workers speak with children alone, ensuring that their home environment remains suitable for them. The agency has a children's engagement coordinator. Their role includes the offer of individual time with children. This helps children to have their say, share any concerns and provide feedback to the agency. The children's guide provides children with different routes to express their views and wishes and reach out for help should this be necessary.

The agency works effectively to ensure that risks are understood. The managers act quickly and professionally to escalate concerns and to press the children's local authority for additional information when this is needed. This helps the agency to forward plan and anticipate risk. Internal risk meetings help supervising social workers to pinpoint potential areas of stress and to anticipate and deliver any additional support for foster carers, their family and the children. Managers take a proactive approach to managing risk.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and the responsible individual are the founder owners. The registered manager is suitably qualified and has significant relevant experience of working in fostering services. The registered manager works seamlessly with the responsible individual, who has an active and influential role in ensuring that the agency delivers the ethos and values described in the statement of purpose.

The manager's high aspiration for children, foster carers and staff permeates the whole service. Foster carers and staff describe an organisational culture of respect, integrity and honesty. Several foster carers have previous experience of working with the registered manager and responsible individual. All foster carers hold the managers in the highest professional regard, describing their commitment to children's well-being and progress as 'second to none'.

The first permanent supervising social worker is employed at a senior level. They have significant relevant experience of working in foster care and hold a practice

educator qualification. Caseloads are low, which means that foster carers benefit from high levels of face-to-face and virtual contact with an experienced team.

Regular face-to-face and virtual team meetings ensure that there are frequent and ongoing conversations about children's day-to-day experiences. Managers encourage reflection and regular discussion at all levels. Reviewing the recommendations and lessons from serious case reviews ensures that the team remains up to date and can learn from research into practice.

The registered manager audits children's and foster carers' case files, providing feedback to ensure that the agency has all relevant and current information. Case direction from the responsible individual ensures that actions to improve children's experiences are captured and actioned.

The agency's policy for exemptions requires an update. There has been one exemption. The managers appropriately sought the approval from a senior manager in the local authority. The backdated exemption notice is clear about the rationale for the decision to place more than three unrelated children in one fostering household. However, the agency decision-maker did not revise the foster carer's terms of approval or set out in sufficient detail a statement outlining whether the foster carer and all members of the household have additional needs because of the revision. This does not ensure that the agency has recorded its thinking about the individual needs of every child in the household because the household is exempt.

The agency ensures that foster carers and staff benefit from a broad range of training. The agency expectation is that second carers complete a minimum number of hours of training each year. Recent joint face-to-face training focusing on therapeutic parenting and use of language has helped to ensure that foster carers and staff are working with the same theoretical approaches in mind. Furthermore, this helps to ensure that foster carers maintain an empathetic approach and respond attentively when children need extra time and support.

Foster carers' records are written sensitively and respectfully to the child to ensure that there is good, meaningful information available for children should they wish to access information about their experiences of being in foster care now or in the future.

The registered manager and responsible individual plan to continue to grow the service and to recruit new staff to ensure an intense level of support for every child.

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>If, taking into account any recommendation made by the fostering panel, the fostering service provider are no longer satisfied that the foster parent or the foster parent's household continue to be suitable, or that the terms of the approval are appropriate, they must (subject to paragraph (8))—</p> <p>in any case where the fostering service provider propose only to revise the terms of the foster parent's approval—</p> <p>provide a statement setting out whether the fostering service provider considers that the foster parent or members of the foster parent's household (including any children placed there) may have additional support needs as a result of the proposed revision and, if so, how those needs will be met, and</p> <p>request the foster parent's agreement in writing to the proposed revision of terms. (Regulation 28 (7)(aa)(i)(ii))</p> | <p>31 March 2023</p> |

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. In particular, review the exemptions and extensions policy. ('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: 2665004

Registered provider: Soundly Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: The Gables, Old Market Street, Thetford, Norfolk
IP24 2EN

Responsible individual: Joy O'Brien-Miller

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Inspector

Rosie Davie, Social Care Inspector

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