

# FosterCare UK

FosterCare UK Ltd

Kent Centre at Newbury House, Court Lodge Farm, Hinxhill, Ashford TN25 5NR

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is part of a national independent fostering agency. It recruits, assesses and approves foster carers in the south east of England. Foster carers provide short-term, long-term, respite, therapeutic and parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection, there were 32 fostering households providing homes for 49 children.

The registered manager has been in post since April 2021 and is suitably qualified and experienced.

### Inspection dates: 27 February to 3 March 2023

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

**Date of last inspection:** 14 January 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 experience nurturing and loving care from their foster carers. Children are warmly welcomed by the foster carers and their extended family and friends. This helps the children, several of whom live with their sisters or brothers, to experience a sense of belonging and security.

Managers, supervising social workers, agency staff and foster carers all share a common and strong desire to improve the life chances of the children by ensuring stability and continuity. As a result, children are helped to develop their potential.

The healthcare needs of the children are met well. Foster carers ensure that children attend all routine healthcare appointments. The agency provides children and foster carers with a specialist multidisciplinary assessment, treatment and therapy service with a core aim of supporting the resilient and empathetic care for the children.

The longevity and relationship-based ethos that the agency promotes helps children to flourish. Therapeutic support is considered as early as possible for children, often before a child joins their new fostering family. The children and their foster carers receive timely clinical support based on their needs. Several foster carers described the clinical support available as a 'lifeline'.

Initiatives such as the children's newsletters and the agency's annual published collection of children's poems encourage the children to share and express their feelings. As a result, the children learn that their contributions are valued, inspire others and can effect change.

Agency staff are creative in individualising feedback templates with pictures and symbols. This helps to ensure that all children have the opportunity to contribute, specifically the children who find it more difficult to communicate verbally.

Foster carers and the agency as a whole are ambitious for children. Managers collate education data at regular intervals to help to inform and track the children's progress. Children make substantial progress from their starting points with their foster families. For example, school attendance for two children has increased from 20% to 100% within a year.

Foster carers recognise and encourage the children's interests and talents. The children enjoy attending a range of fun activities and clubs. Children also enjoy attending events that the agency organises. These are fun, and also promote and encourage the children's social and emotional development.

When unplanned endings for children occur, supervising social workers do their best to ensure that the welfare of the children remains at the centre of decision-making. Supervising social workers and managers complete a review of circumstances

leading to any unplanned endings for children and identify areas of learning. This informs new learning and future planning.

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

Supervision visits to foster carers are regular and child-focused. Manageable caseloads mean that the supervising social workers have sufficient time to offer a good level of support to the foster carers and the children. Visiting patterns and contact with the foster carers increase when more support is required. Supervising social workers provide sensitive but honest challenge to the foster carers, ensuring that the focus remains on the children's well-being and safety.

Dedicated agency staff provide foster carers with early help and consistent support. Foster carers learn to understand the children's trauma and attachment needs and help them to build resilience. Outside office hours, there is an effective on-call system.

Supervising social workers make unannounced visits to foster carers at least once a year. Children contribute to their foster carers' annual review. Annual health and safety checks, alongside monthly supervision visits, ensure that foster homes are safe places for children to live in.

Strong safeguarding reporting processes are in place for all matters relating to child protection. When concerns are raised or become known, the agency staff act quickly and use lessons learned to further improve safeguarding practice. Regular staff team meetings support learning and development.

Children rarely go missing. This is because they are settled and have good relationships with their foster carers. Risk assessments are updated regularly and reflect consultation with children. However, they do not contain missing child profiles or specific information such as known addresses and contacts of the children. This has the potential to delay the police and safeguarding agencies in locating a child missing from home.

Safer caring is individualised for the children and the foster families. Foster carers receive ongoing guidance and training about creating a safe online environment for the children in their care. However, risk assessments do not sufficiently explore the risks and benefits of children's use of social media.

Foster carers have access to a broad and relevant training programme. Managers have good oversight of the foster carers' training needs. Foster carers complete their mandatory training within the required time frames. However, a shortfall was found relating to a new foster carer not completing training around a child's specific learning difficulties before the child joined the family.

The agency panel chair and fostering panel members provide strong safeguarding oversight and quality assurance to the agency. Thorough scrutiny ensures that foster

carers are only approved if they have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide safe and caring homes for the children.

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

Leaders and managers are visible, inspirational and committed to providing a supportive and respectful service. The registered manager is passionate about providing high-quality care that improves and enhances the children's life chances.

This is an agency that values learning. Managers are keen to promote research-based practice and this is taken forward to ensure the development and continuous improvement of the agency. There are excellent opportunities for staff and foster carers to develop.

Leaders and managers recognise the importance of investment in their staff and foster carers. The foster carers and the agency staff are skilled, feel valued and go that extra mile to ensure that children receive the best possible care.

Leaders, managers and supervising social workers have positive and collaborative relationships with external professionals and key people who are important to the children. This builds trust and engagement and helps to ensure that the children get the resources and help that they need to succeed.

Regular supervision, yearly appraisals and frequent child-focused team meetings empower the supervising social workers in their role to help and support the foster carers and the children.

The agency has strong, safe recruitment practices. Staff said that they feel valued and appreciated by the managers. New staff undertake a well-planned induction. This ensures that children are cared for by a suitable and safe staff team.

Minor shortfalls were found in some of the children's records, for example, missing local authority care and placement plans. This means that foster carers may not have the most up-to-date and relevant information. However, supervising social workers routinely take minutes of meetings and they have good systems in place to chase up and escalate concerns about children's missing documentation with local authorities.

The registered manager knows the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. There is strong evidence of ongoing development and improvements over a sustained period to improve the outcomes for the children.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted in all fostering placements. In particular, that risk assessments sufficiently explore the risks and benefits of the children's social media use. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.1)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are trained in appropriate safer-care practice. For foster carers who offer placements to disabled children, this includes training specifically on issues affecting disabled children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.6)
- The registered person should ensure that each foster carer is aware of all the necessary information available to the fostering service about a child's circumstances and health needs. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that the care and support provided to children minimise the risk that they will go missing from care and reduce the risk of harm should they go missing. This relates to ensuring that the agency has up-to-date missing children profiles that contain known addresses and contacts of the children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 5.1)

### **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:** SC363485

**Registered provider:** FosterCare UK Ltd

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

**Responsible individual:** Steven Blackwood

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## **Inspector**

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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