

# Shared Care Services Limited

Shared Care Services Limited

119 Eastern Avenue, Redbridge, Ilford IG4 5AN

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

Shared Care Services (fostering division) specialises in providing foster care homes for disabled children. The service provides individual and sibling group placements, bridging, emergency, short-term and long-term placements. The agency also runs a domiciliary care service for children who are disabled. This service supports the fostering service.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering service had 34 approved fostering households, caring for 31 children. The fostering service registered with Ofsted in February 2011, and the registered manager registered at the same time.

### Inspection dates: 10 to 14 July 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	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 28 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 receive individualised care that meets their needs well, and they are very well matched with their foster families. Foster carers are skilled in caring for disabled children, children who have complex medical needs and/or children who have life-limiting health conditions. Some children have reached an age that is well beyond their indicated life expectancy.

Children are supported to live healthily. This has been the case before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children's health needs are very well understood by foster carers, who manage their healthcare and treatment plans safely. Foster carers work effectively with healthcare professionals. Foster carers receive training in relevant healthcare issues, and they manage children's medication safely.

Children benefit from their foster carers' ability to interpret and understand their needs and offer person-centred care. Children develop strong and trusting relationships with their foster families. This is important as many of the children are non-verbal and are reliant on their foster families understanding their needs. A child told the inspector, 'The best thing about my family is that they love me.'

Children benefit from the stability of placements, and many of the children have lived with their foster families for a number of years. Some children have been placed permanently with their foster families. There are a number of young people who continue to live with their families in 'staying put' arrangements. Unplanned endings are rare.

Children's learning outcomes are good. Children attend school and college very regularly. Foster carers and staff work very closely with educational professionals to ensure that children's learning targets are achieved. Older children are supported to develop practical skills that promote their independence.

Children take part in a wide range of social, educational and leisure activities. They enjoy experiences that they might otherwise have not experienced. Children's achievements are celebrated by their families and the fostering service. However, some foster carers say that they would like the fostering service to explore providing more activities for their birth children.

Prospective foster carers who contact the fostering service receive a prompt and welcoming response. Assessments for prospective foster carers are comprehensive and analytical. Foster carers receive excellent support and say that this and the availability of staff are the strongest features of the service. However, some foster carers feel that allocated respite days are insufficient in supporting complex placements, and they request that the current formal respite arrangements be reviewed.

Foster carers have professional and supportive relationships with staff of the fostering service. They work in partnership with external professionals effectively. A local authority social worker said, 'The strengths of the service are that the foster carers are knowledgeable and experienced; they are able to care effectively for children with complex needs. The agency has been responsive to the child's needs. I have a good working relationship with the agency.'

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

Foster carers and staff work hard to keep children safe. They receive specialist training in how to keep disabled children safe, and they are familiar with child protection procedures. Foster carers are knowledgeable and vigilant about children's individual vulnerabilities. This helps to keep children safe.

Foster carers' supervision of children is highly effective. This is important to protect children who need constant care and those who have a limited understanding of danger. Children do not experience child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, substance misuse or radicalisation. Self-harm and missing-from-care incidents are rare. When these do happen, foster carers and staff take appropriate action to help children to be safe.

Foster carers and staff work very effectively with other safeguarding professionals to ensure that children are kept safe. Foster carers encourage children to adhere to structure and boundaries to encourage positive behaviour. However, staff do not devise plans that offer foster carers detailed guidance about what to do if children display challenging behaviour.

Risk assessments are effective in identifying and addressing risks. However, risk assessment documents also incorporate behaviour management planning and safe care plans. This one document does not sufficiently detail household safe care plans that address the particular vulnerabilities of children.

Complaints and allegations against foster carers are rare. When these do occur, managers adhere to safeguarding procedures and liaise effectively with other safeguarding professionals. Managers conduct comprehensive standard of care investigations. These investigations are managed sensitively and keep children central to all enquiries. Foster carers who are subject to investigations receive appropriate support.

Foster carers' homes are appropriate and safe to care for disabled children. Some homes have been adapted and contain adapted equipment. Staff complete unannounced visits to foster carers' homes to ensure that their accommodation remains a safe environment for children.

Managers recruit staff in line with safe recruitment policies. This confirms that staff are suitable to work with vulnerable children. Local authority staff are consistent in commenting that children are safe living with their foster families.

A local authority social worker said, 'I have a child with very complex needs with a shared-care foster carer. I would say that the carer is very attuned to this child's needs and has a good understanding of his trauma and presenting behaviours. A team of support workers supports the placement due to the level of need to help the foster carer provide good care and keep the child safe.'

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

The leadership and management of the fostering service are strong. The registered manager has extensive experience, qualifications and skills to manage a fostering service for disabled children. The responsible individual has a good presence at the service and manages the agency's supporting domiciliary care service.

The fostering service is meeting the aims and objectives as stated in the statement of purpose. Some of the areas identified for improvement at the last inspection are yet to be resolved and are repeated at this inspection.

The monitoring systems are good. For example, managers complete regular file audits and complete quality of care monitoring reports. However, these reports are not in line with the fostering regulations as they do not consistently include the feedback from stakeholders or action plans to help to improve the service.

Managers provide excellent support and supervision to staff; they are readily available to all stakeholders and adopt a 'hands-on' approach in supporting the staff team. A staff member said, 'Throughout my tenure, the agency has provided me with all the necessary support to excel in my role. This comprehensive support has significantly contributed to my professional development and enabled me to provide support to the foster carers.' Managers complete staff appraisals each year to ensure that staff's development needs are met.

The fostering panel promotes safe and secure foster care placements. The fostering panel functions robustly; the process is orderly and democratic. Panel members have good experience and expertise in their chosen fields. The administration of the fostering panel is well organised. However, fostering panel minutes do not always accurately reflect comments made about the decision-making process. The accuracy of fostering panel minutes was highlighted as an area for improvement at the last inspection.

The fostering agency routinely present at panel approved foster carers' back up support carers. This ensures that back-up carers are also suitable to care for children. This is innovative and evidence of good practice. The agency's domiciliary support workers work very closely with foster carers. This helps to provide children with the level of support that they need.

Foster carers receive excellent support. They identify this as a clear strength of the service. Foster carers' training and development activities are wide-ranging and effective in meeting the needs of disabled children. A foster carer said, 'In all my 10

years fostering, all my questions have been answered. Support is a major part of it. Staff are available 24-7. They're solution focused; training and support is excellent.'

Managers do not always ensure that training identified for foster carers is completed in a timely fashion or that training is effective in meeting the needs of 'hard-to-reach' foster carers. This was an area identified for improvement at the last inspection. Foster carers' annual reviews take place each year.

Leaders and managers have an ambitious vision for the development of the fostering service and high aspirations for children's achievements. Managers, staff and foster carers demonstrate well that they can care for disabled children safely, encourage their progress and provide children with positive experiences.

# 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, The 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 must maintain a system for—</p> <p>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and</p> <p>improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (3))</p>	15 August 2023

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that support and training are made available to foster carers, including hard-to-reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or expected to care for. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.8)
- The registered person should ensure that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate. In particular, they should ensure that panel minutes reflect the discussion held with applicants about the role of the agency decision maker. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.7)
- The registered person should ensure that consideration is given to any help or support needed by the sons and daughters of foster carers. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.6)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are provided with breaks from caring as appropriate. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.5)
- The registered person should implement a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the child's file. In particular, they should ensure that there are separate risk assessment, behavioural management and safe care plan documents. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.1)

## **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:** SC416392

**Registered provider:** Shared Care Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** 119 Eastern Avenue, Redbridge, Ilford IG4 5AN

**Responsible individual:** Owais Khan

**Registered manager:** Mohammad Siddiqui

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## **Inspector**

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector



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