

# People Who Foster

People Who Foster Ltd

Unit 8, Innovation Studios, Canal Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4DT

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

People Who Foster is a family run independent fostering agency based in Medway, Kent, serving the South East and the North West. The agency registered with Ofsted on 4 October 2017 and provides a range of placements. These include short term, including bridging and pre-adoption, emergency, long term, respite, unaccompanied minors, parent and child, and children with disabilities. There are currently 33 approved foster carers and 45 children placed with the agency.

### Inspection dates: 17 to 21 July 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 **requires improvement to be good**

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

**Date of last inspection:** 11 March 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**

This is a small supportive agency where child-centred, relationship-based care is central to its ethos. Most of the children live in long-term settled fostering family households and experience kindness, love and belonging. These relationships form the basis from which children grow in confidence and make progress across all areas of their lives.

Children enjoy family holidays, outings and celebrations. Foster carers and the agency staff make sure that children are provided with lots of opportunities to attend clubs and follow their interests. The activities that many of the children attend are fun and life-enhancing. This increases the children's self-esteem and helps improve their emotional and social well-being.

Supervising social workers and foster carers understand the important role that they play in helping children to understand their life stories. They ensure that important memorabilia and photos are shared with the children and are safely stored. These measures support the children to make sense of their past and develop a clear sense of their identity for their future.

Foster carers and the agency staff support and encourage the children's aspirations and educational achievements. They act as strong advocates for children to ensure that their educational needs are well met.

Foster carers and supervising social workers support and encourage the children to keep in touch and maintain relationships with their families when it is part of their care plan and in their best interests. This helps the children to develop relationships with their families which enrich their understanding of their heritage.

Children often have the opportunity to continue to live with their foster carers when they reach 18. Staying put arrangements are well considered and planned early. This goes together with the agency's drive to help the children develop independence for their adult life. Supervising social workers forge links with partner agencies to ensure that the right support is available for children when they need it.

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

Foster carers, supervising social workers and managers know the children well and understand their strengths and vulnerabilities. The positive relationships that children have with their foster carers and other trusted adults are a strong protective factor for the children. Safe care plans are individual to the children and provide guidance to the foster carers to safely meet the needs of the children in their care.

The agency operates an effective out-of-hours service. Foster carers said that they receive the same level of support and advice in the middle of the night as they do in the daytime.

Prospective foster carers feel valued and welcomed by the agency. They said that the supportive nature of the agency stood out to them from the start. The process for assessment is timely and sensitive to their needs. Those who go on to foster feel well prepared by the application process and the training that is provided.

Careful recruitment of foster carers and staff prevents unsuitable adults from being recruited.

Overall, plans and risk assessments are updated quickly to reflect the emerging risks for the children, alongside providing sound guidance for foster carers. However, children's files do not consistently contain their up-to-date local authority care plans, placement plans or health reviews. Consequently, some foster carers are not provided with the documents that they may need. However, supervising social workers and managers regularly chase up missing documents. In practice, the foster carers and supervising social workers have a good understanding of the needs of the children.

Supervising social workers and the managers are usually proactive and follow procedures for responding to child protection concerns in a timely way. However, a shortfall was identified in the agency's response to a historical allegation, which was not previously known to the agency. This had the potential to place a child at risk. This was addressed during the inspection.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

The home is managed by a suitably experienced registered manager who is on track to complete her childcare management qualification within the required time frame.

The registered manager has ensured that, in most instances, there are good systems in place for the regional managers to monitor and quality assure the supervising social workers' practice and record-keeping. However, one safeguarding matter had not been promptly responded to. In addition, the quality of care monitoring report does not state how the consultations that the agency has with children, foster carers and placing authorities inform service improvements.

Foster carers unanimously said that they felt well supported by the personable leaders and agency staff. There are high levels of communication, including regular phone calls providing extra support between the foster carers and the supervising social workers when it is needed.

Foster carers have access to a broad range of training, which is mainly online. However, managers and leaders do not always have sufficient oversight of how the foster carers consolidate their learning, given that some have completed multiple

online courses on the same day. For example, one foster carer undertook five separate courses in one day, which included child protection training. In addition, in two cases, leaders and the registered manager had not ensured that foster carers had undertaken specialised training specific to the needs of the children that they care for. This had the potential to impact on how equipped they were for their roles.

Records of foster carers' supervision are not of consistent quality. For instance, some supervision records do not reflect professional curiosity or focus on the children's experiences, wishes or views. In addition, although supervising social workers visit children, some supervision notes do not make this clear or state when children have been seen alone.

Leaders have not set out an agency expectation of how often secondary foster carers should attend supervision meetings. As a result, some secondary foster carers do not regularly join supervision meetings, even when difficulties in the fostering household have been identified by the agency. This means that managers and supervising social workers cannot always be fully assured that both foster carers have the skills and competencies to ensure that the children's needs are being met.

The registered manager is proactive in addressing standard of care issues, complaints and allegations. Proper investigations are carried out and there is good multi-agency working with placing and host authorities as necessary. The usual practice in the agency, following an investigation, is for foster carers to return to panel for a review of their suitability to foster. However, in one instance, foster carers resigned to move to another agency before a review at panel of their suitability was concluded.

The directors and the registered manager are actively involved in all aspects of this growing agency. They demonstrate a high level of commitment to continually develop and improve the service so that children receive high-quality care.

# 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>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 (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(b) (3))</p>	1 September 2023
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (3))</p>	1 September 2023

## Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted in all fostering placements. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.11)
- The registered person should ensure that each approved foster carer has regular meetings with a qualified social worker and that this also includes secondary approved foster carers at regular intervals. Meetings should have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure that the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's

performance and develop their competencies and skills. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.8)

- The registered person should ensure that, as soon as possible after an investigation into a foster carer is concluded, their approval as suitable to foster is reviewed. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 22.8)
- The registered person should ensure effective oversight of the service ensures all staff's work and all fostering activity is consistent with the 2011 regulations and NMS and immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.3)
- The registered person should ensure good-quality training is made available to foster carers, to assist them to develop the skills required to meet the specific needs of the children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.8)

## **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:** 1259617

**Registered provider:** People Who Foster Ltd

**Registered provider address:** People Who Foster Ltd, Bank Chambers,  
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**Responsible individual:** Graham Bartram

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## **Inspector**

Anne-Marie Davies, Social Care Inspector

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