

Barnardo's Brighton & Hove Link Plus

Barnardo's

Bizspace Knoll Business Centre, Office Unit C2, 325-327 Old Shoreham Road, Hove
BN3 7GS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Barnardo's Brighton and Hove Link Plus independent fostering agency is funded by Brighton and Hove City Council. The service provides short-break, shared-care, and long-term foster care to disabled children and young people. At the time of inspection, there were seven fostering households offering care to eight children and one young adult on a staying put agreement.

A small number of fostering households are dual-registered with the adult shared lives scheme. As some young people become adults, they continue to stay with their existing foster carers.

Inspection dates: 14 to 17 August 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 4 March 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children in this agency receive exemplary care. The foster carers and agency staff understand the needs, development and learning of every child that they care for. As a result, children make extraordinary progress. Foster carers receive specialist training to ensure that they can meet the children's highly complex needs. The high standards of care and support provided are individual to each child because foster carers know the children well.

Staff and carers provide support that exceeds expectations. For example, fostering agency social workers offer support to carers outside of normal working hours. This is in addition to the agency on-call system. Foster carers build strong individual relationships with the parents of the children that they care for. They become essential members of the team around the family and work closely in partnership with parents. For example, they provide support with the children's health appointments, which contributes significantly to the children's health outcomes. One carer, because they know the child and parent well, supports a parent with their literacy. All the agency staff and foster carers work to improve the life experiences and outcomes for children.

Meticulous assessment and referral processes mean that agency staff understand the children's needs well. The agency staff carefully match children with suitably skilled and experienced foster carers. The introduction process is comprehensive and allows time for the carer and child to build a relationship before any overnight stays begin. Staff consult children throughout this process, and some children contribute significantly to their plans. Social workers and parents speak highly of the quality of the matching.

Children have experiences that are exceptional. This is because the strong partnership working between staff and carers ensures that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are not disadvantaged. They work to ensure that the children do not miss the kind of experiences that other children have access to, such as enjoying holidays abroad or seeing Santa Claus. Carers support children to go swimming and to enjoy hobbies such as horticulture and fishing.

The service is highly child-centred. There is a strong commitment to consultation with children, and their opportunities to influence the service are extensive. As a result, the children become involved and there is a strong feeling of co-ownership.

Foster carers receive regular, reflective and focused supervision from staff who know them well. Carers, without exception, spoke highly of the continuous support that

they receive from agency staff. Supervision has a focus not only on meeting the diverse and sometimes complex needs of the children, but also on the continued development of the carer. This strengthens carers' ability to provide exemplary care to children.

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

The service has strong processes to address and reflect on safeguarding concerns. This ensures the continued safety of children. An unsubstantiated allegation against a carer was robustly reviewed. Detailed learning from this process is accessible to staff.

Carers receive regular safeguarding training. Staff and carers have a good understanding of risk, and risk is well-managed. Individualised risk assessments reflect the complex needs of each child. Agency staff keep the risk assessments under regular review and update them to include any new risks or changes to the level of risk. Involvement from the whole team around the child ensures the strong and dynamic management of risk.

Comprehensive safer caring plans are in place for every child. The plans ensure that carers understand the children's individual needs. Consequently, children have their needs met in a safe, considered, and caring way.

The children are well supervised, and none have gone missing from care. Some children at times require surveillance for their safety. When needed, this is managed transparently, and appropriate consents are in place.

Parents have confidence in the skills, knowledge, and experience of carers. They are extremely positive about the care that their children receive. One parent said, 'I can completely relax when my child goes for their short break. I feel that they are safe.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The management team shows a high degree of ambition for the children in their care. They have high expectations of the agency staff and help staff to provide the best possible support to carers and the children that they care for. Leaders and managers model exemplary practice and staff value this.

The management team strongly advocates for children and carers. They ensure that carers have the tools that they need and the specialised training to provide exceptional care for children.

The service is highly responsive to foster carers' learning needs. The management team is a strong advocate for, and works closely in partnership with, parents. The managers have a 'can do' attitude that permeates the service. Parents hold the management team in high esteem.

The management team provides a strong and supportive environment for staff. They are responsive and provide staff with consistently high-quality support and supervision. Managers are creative and explore the benefits of a variety of models of care. For example, they are exploring a community support model that may further nurture the relationships between children and their foster families.

Systems for ensuring carers and children's voices are heard are exceptionally strong. The children's champion role ensures that children are involved in the recruitment of foster carers and staff, and they sit on interview panels and contribute to the training of carers. The well attended carer consultation council provides foster carers with the opportunity to effect change.

Managers have strong professional relationships with a range of partner agencies. This strengthens the opportunities to ensure the best possible care, experiences, and futures for children. The service is long-established and well-known in the community. Equality, diversity, and difference are celebrated. Intense training for staff and carers ensures that inclusion is central to practice. Agency managers address colleges and universities and talk about equality and inclusion issues. This includes caring for children with SEND.

The joint fostering panel, with the partnering host local authority, continues to work well. The panel members work together to ensure that there is a high level of oversight and scrutiny of applications and fostering households. The panel continues to grow in diversity and now includes a care experienced young person. The use of an independent reviewing officer to carry out carer reviews and other investigations offers a further level of impartiality and scrutiny.

Managers know the service well. Through strong monitoring processes they are aware of the strengths and areas for development. However, while the manager has made regular updates to the service's statement of purpose, she has not provided a copy to Ofsted.

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>Statement of purpose and children's guide</p> <p>The fostering service provider must compile a written statement in relation to the fostering service ("the statement of purpose") which consists of—</p> <p>a statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service, and</p> <p>a statement as to the services and facilities (including any parent and child arrangements) provided by the fostering service.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must provide a copy of the statement of purpose to the Chief Inspector, place a copy on their website (if they have one), and make copies available, upon request to—</p> <p>any person working for the purposes of the fostering service, any foster parent or prospective foster parent of the fostering service,</p> <p>any child placed with a foster parent by the fostering service, and</p> <p>the parent of any such child.</p> <p>(Regulation 3 (1) (a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the document is provided to Ofsted following any updates.</p>	05 October 2023

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: SC045651

Registered provider: Barnardo's

Registered provider address: Barnardo's, Barnardo House, Tanners Lane,
Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG

Responsible individual: Lucy Ivankovic

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Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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