

Lighthouse Fostering

Lighthouse Fostering Limited

Quayside House, Standard Quay, Faversham, Kent ME13 7BS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Lighthouse Fostering is a privately owned independent fostering agency that has been registered with Ofsted since 2014. At the time of this inspection, there were 18 fostering households caring for 29 children. The agency provides long-term, short-term, bridging, emergency and parent and child placements, and respite care.

The current manager has been registered with Ofsted since 19 April 2023.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 October 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: 9 December 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

Foster carers are confident, warm and responsive in their care for children. They know the children well and provide thoughtful and individualised care. They show a commitment to ensuring that the children receive the individual care and support that they need. Foster carers promote the children's continuous development. They work together with the agency to ensure that the children have positive experiences. This helps to create lasting memories.

There are good relationships between partner professionals, children and parents. Partner professionals gave positive feedback about how staff and carers work with them. These positive working relationships show a clear commitment to working together in the best interests of the child. Regular professional network meetings, usually instigated by the agency, keep focus on the child, preventing drift in accessing much-needed services and support.

The agency provides a good training programme to foster carers. The 12-week therapeutic parenting course, facilitated by the therapist, has been completed by 95% of primary carers. This helps foster carers better understand the children's trauma and individual needs. Children and carers can access the resources and support provided by the agency therapist.

Carers show a sound commitment to children's education. Carers find the new education coordinator a valuable resource. The education coordinator works with foster carers and agency staff to ensure that the children receive the education that they deserve. A clear system is in place to track the progress of children in their education pathway.

Children have good opportunities to share their views and wishes. The agency staff consult with them. Because they feel listened to, the children are actively engaged and respond to the various surveys and requests for their views. Agency social workers take the time to speak to the children during their supervision visits to the foster carer's home. This develops a relationship where children feel able to share their views. The agency actively involves the children in development of the service. The education coordinator supported a group of children to develop new, well-considered and child-centred guides to the fostering agency.

Children have positive experiences. They attend celebratory agency social events, such as Halloween and Christmas parties. Carers ensure that children access a range of activities that interest them and promote their individuality. For example, some children are part of running and gymnastics clubs, and others enjoy swimming or fishing. There are several groups of brothers and sisters who live with agency carers. The foster carers promote their individual identities and interests well.

Foster carers support children to develop their confidence and prepare them for their future. They help children prepare and plan for the time when they will move on.

This includes supporting them to learn budgeting skills. Foster carers and supervising social workers discuss plans for independence in monthly supervisions and network meetings. The agency staff recognise when young people reaching adulthood are not ready for a move. They highlight in network meetings the amount of practical support and continued therapeutic support needed.

Carers promote family time and support this regardless of the distance. The education coordinator works with foster carers to identify school places as soon as possible. This is to ensure that children do not miss their education.

Newly approved foster carers report having had a positive experience of joining the agency. They feel well supported through a thorough assessment process. Experienced carers buddy new carers and provide extra support as well as friendship. Without exception, foster carers said that the fostering agency feels like a family.

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

The agency social workers and foster carers understand children's individual needs. Risks are known and the agency and foster carers work together to keep children safe. Detailed risk assessments, and safer caring plans, provide a good framework for understanding how to best manage each child's safety. Staff review and update them regularly.

Foster carers receive training that prepares them for managing behaviours that create risks for children. This includes training around missing-from-home incidents. Foster carers know and follow the clear procedures in place to manage situations when children go missing from home. Carers receive training around the wider safeguarding issues, such as internet safety and child criminal and sexual exploitation. Carers have worked with children to help improve children's awareness of how to keep themselves safe.

Carers understand the need to provide clear and consistent boundaries for children. They recognise that this helps children to feel safe and secure. Foster carers make good use of de-escalation training to manage challenging behaviours.

Foster carers and staff know what to do, and who to inform, when they have concerns about a child's welfare. Good safeguarding arrangements are in place and the procedures are followed.

Children feel safe and secure with their foster carers. One child said, 'We feel safe, and we love them very much.' Another child said, 'I have been with them for [number of] years. I call them mum and dad. I feel safe and supported by them.' One professional said that the carer is the child's 'safe person'.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has high expectations for what children can achieve. In partnership with the responsible individual, she provides good opportunities for children to

progress. This includes input from the therapist and education coordinator. The introduction of the children's progress monitoring meetings provides a structured opportunity for tracking the progress of children. This allows staff to understand where difficulties are and how to reduce these.

Leaders and managers are responsive to the needs of carers and children. However, the process of making changes to one carer's approval was untidy and confusing. This led to documentation that was not clear about how decisions had been reached.

Leaders and managers ensure that supervising social workers provide regular and effective supervision to carers. This helps carers to support the continued growth and well-being of the children that they care for. The provision of support and mentalisation groups helps carers to understand the needs and behaviours of children, while ensuring that they are well supported to make progress.

The agency managers provide a supportive environment for staff. There is a strong training offer for staff to help them meet the needs of specific children. There is an expectation that social work staff complete the 12-week therapeutic parenting course. Staff feel well supported. Supervision, appraisals and inductions are of a good standard. They reflect the commitment of leaders and managers to develop their staff.

Leaders and managers are aware of the agency's strengths and areas for development. The agency has met the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. The manager uses monthly audits to ensure compliance. The manager discusses any improvements needed with social work staff in supervisions. The responsible person completes six-monthly audits and uses the findings to drive improvement.

There is a strong commitment to good professional working relationships. There is clear recognition of the importance of these relationships to achieve the best possible outcomes for children. The promotion of regular network meetings shows the agency's commitment to the best possible support for children.

The manager recognises the importance of all relevant documentation being in place for all children. However, she has not always escalated the issue of important missing documentation to children's placing authorities. This is a missed opportunity to further develop relationships with placing authorities while improving the quality of information held.

Leaders and managers understand the importance of promoting equality and diversity. They expect that all staff and carers complete equality and diversity training regularly. The manager has built good relationships with carers. It is hoped that this will encourage them to feel able to raise any concerns or issues with her. Leaders and managers recognise the need for a diverse panel and carer group that can meet the wide-ranging needs of the children referred to the agency.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should regularly monitor all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies. This particularly relates to the registered person ensuring that carer review documents are clear and up to date when making recommendations for changes in approval. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the foster carer is given a copy of the child's placement plan as soon as this is provided to them by the responsible authority. If provision of the care plan by the responsible authority is delayed, the fostering service should make robust representations to relevant officers in the placing authority to ensure these documents are received. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 31.2)

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: SC479090

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Registered provider address: Quayside House, Standard Quay, Faversham, Kent ME13 7BS

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Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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