

# Beams Foster Care and Family Service Limited

Beams Foster Care and Family Services Limited

Shrublands Cottages, Magadalen Way, Gorleston, Norfolk, Norwich NR31 7BP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is privately owned and supports 17 fostering households in the Norfolk and Suffolk area. At the time of the inspection, the agency was providing services for 32 children.

The registered manager has been in post since the service registered in 2014.

### Inspection dates: 5 to 9 February 2024

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account	<b>outstanding</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 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:** 11 February 2019

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

The agency supports foster carers to provide children with outstanding care. Most children make exceptional progress from their starting points and thrive in their foster families. This includes children who have complex and additional needs. The agency ensures that children who need more support receive a higher level of care that fully meets their individual needs.

Feedback from children's social workers includes:

- 'Children thrive. The ongoing work and commitment from their professionals and the foster carers means that they have positive future plans.'
- 'Children's care is exceptional, it is second to none.'
- 'The foster carer responds to [name of child] in a therapeutic way, I don't think we could find a better placement for him.'
- 'Things are the best they have ever been for [name of child]. The foster carers talk about him with passion and pride.'
- 'Opportunities available have been amazing. No doubt [name of child] will achieve his long-held career aspirations with the support of the foster carers and the agency.'

Foster carers are supported by the agency to be effective and tenacious advocates for children. Foster carers appropriately challenge others to ensure that children receive relevant assessments. This helps to ensure that children have access to the services and resources that they are entitled to. Children's social workers recognise the determination of foster carers in fighting on behalf of the children they care for.

Children benefit from well-planned, creative care that increases their self-esteem and reduces stigma. Children learn important personal care skills, which improves their daily routines. As a result, children enjoy new experiences with increased confidence.

Children are provided with stability in their foster families. Most children see foster carers' birth children as their brothers and sisters, and this feeling is reciprocated. This helps children to build a sense of belonging and acceptance. One child said, 'We are a family with a strong connection.' Where possible, the agency finds opportunities to offer brothers and sisters fostering households where they can live together. Foster carers make sure that children enjoy time with their parents and other people who are important to them in the fostering household, doing activities that children like.

Foster carers work cohesively and effectively with schools to share an understanding of children's needs and to provide consistency. When necessary, foster carers

provide children with extra-curricular learning to improve children's educational attainment and enhance opportunities for them to reach their full potential.

Foster carers are proud of the children they provide care for. They recognise and celebrate their achievements and capture these in children's records. The agency has recently developed a new template to ensure that children's experiences are summarised in a way that is accessible and meaningful for children to share now and in the future.

Supervising social workers know the children well. They prioritise time to establish positive relationships with children and to observe them in the fostering household. This helps to ensure that they understand children's needs, wishes and feelings and what support foster carers need to meet these. In addition, a dedicated worker is focused on ensuring that children have opportunities to share their views, which are used to inform meetings and reviews. Children are involved in decision-making.

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

Foster carers enable children to try new experiences and take age-appropriate risks. The agency has developed a 'risk toolkit' for foster carers to help children understand the risks they may encounter and make safer choices. This includes online and community risks. When children are assessed as being safe to spend some time at home alone, foster carers update their safer caring plans to manage this.

Children feel safe and protected. Foster carers have a good understanding of children's individual vulnerabilities and work well with professionals to implement appropriate risk-reduction strategies. Guidance on managing children's risks is included in safer care plans. However, these plans do not always reflect the most up-to-date presenting risks and are not consistently discussed with all the adults in the family.

Foster carers attend de-escalation training and can implement strategies to help children manage their emotions. Foster carers are supported to understand children's behaviour and triggers and to respond to incidents when children are distressed or upset. On the rare occasion children are held by their foster carers, this is explored in detail by the supervising social workers. The agency provides good management oversight and a focus on alternative strategies. Physical intervention by foster carers is proportionate and used only as a last resort.

Children do not regularly go missing from carers' homes. When children have gone missing, they have received sensitive responses from their foster carers on return, and incidents have reduced. Foster carers respond quickly to find children and report any missing-from-home incidents to the relevant professionals. Managers ensure that all incidents are recorded and monitored.

Allegations against foster carers are well managed. Managers ensure that all actions are taken in line with outcomes of multi-agency meetings and hold other professionals to account for their safeguarding roles.

Safer recruitment processes are embedded in the employment of all staff and panel members. Assessments of new foster carers are comprehensive and subject to appropriate scrutiny by the fostering panel. The agency decision-maker, who is also the responsible individual, is meticulous in her review and quality assurance of any applications submitted to the panel.

Managers carefully monitor incidents involving the children. This enables additional safety measures to be put in place, including increased adult supervision and time spent with the child.

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

The agency is led by highly experienced and qualified managers with expertise in fostering. Senior managers, who are also the directors, lead a well-organised and dedicated team of staff who have high aspirations for children.

Managers have a detailed knowledge of the children and foster carers who they support. Managers are well respected by staff and foster carers. Foster carers value the small family feel of the agency and the direct access to senior managers. As a result, managers maintain an operational overview of social work practice and foster carers' satisfaction, which contributes to continual improvement of the support offered by the agency.

Managers have high expectations of practice, leading by example. They lead reflective practice discussions to learn from incidents and feedback. This includes reviewing and exploring placement decision-making and unplanned endings to reduce reoccurrence and improve stability for children. Managers have resourced a clinical therapist to underpin the agency's approach to therapeutic care.

Managers have high expectations of staff practice. They offer regular, good-quality case supervision and support and opportunities for staff to develop and progress professionally.

There is a comprehensive training offer, which includes face-to-face and online training. Supervising social workers develop personal development plans that identify foster carers' learning styles and needs. Foster carers' expertise is recognised and cascaded through the carers' network group.

Children's social workers and commissioners said that managers contribute positively to planning for children and offering local child-focused foster care. Managers are confident decision-makers and can challenge poor practice effectively, particularly when advocating for children.

Managers have an excellent knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their service and a clear development plan for ongoing improvement. Managers identify relevant expertise to support the agency or foster carers directly as needed.

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

### **Recommendation**

- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted in all fostering placements. This specifically relates to ensuring that safer caring policies for the children and fostering household provide guidance for foster carers on the current risks and that principles are shared and understood by all members of the fostering household. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 14, paragraph 4.1)

### **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:** SC477026

**Registered provider:** Beams Foster Care and Family Services Limited

**Registered provider address:** Holly Bank, Heath Loke, Poringland, Norwich NR14 7JU

**Responsible individual:** Beryl Sims

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## **Inspectors**

Trish Palmer, Social Care Inspector

Paula Edwards, Social Care Inspector

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