

Flourish Fostering (North)

Flourish Fostering Limited

St Luke's Chapel, 57a Buxton Road, Stockport SK2 6NB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency registered with Ofsted in August 2023. The manager registered with Ofsted in August 2023.

The agency provides respite, short-term, long-term, emergency, parent and child, and sibling placements for children with a range of needs. Placements are provided by foster carers who are recruited by the agency.

At the time of this inspection, the agency was providing placements for six children, and had seven approved fostering households.

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 March 2024

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: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are at the heart of this agency. They receive high-quality individualised care and support that enables them to grow and flourish. Observations of foster parents with children are warm, caring and nurturing. One child who spoke about their foster parents said, 'They are funny; they are the best. They really do care.' Foster parents help children to feel fully valued and invested.

There is a high level of therapeutic input, which is individualised to each fostering household for the children who they are caring for. Therapists complete detailed therapeutic assessments. These support foster parents to understand the child's trauma and adverse childhood experiences and how best to support the child. This supports children's progress and placement stability.

Foster parents ensure that they actively promote the health and well-being of children in their care. Children are registered with health practitioners and benefit from attending routine health appointments, such as the dentist and opticians. All children are up to date with childhood immunisations.

Education is a priority for foster parents, and children are supported to make good progress in education. For one child who arrived without being in education, the registered manager has been proactive and persistent in advocating for an educational provision for them.

Children are encouraged to develop their creativity and imagination by growing vegetables and learning how to look after animals. Children are given opportunities to take part in new activities and enjoy experiences that were previously not available to them. This includes holidays and community-based activities, such as pony riding, guides, rugby, and learning to play the guitar. This supports children's confidence, self-esteem, and social skills.

Birth children said that they feel supported and valued by the agency and enjoy relationships with all of the staff team. When staff visit their home, they always spend time speaking with birth children to seek their views.

Foster carer recruitment includes a detailed initial home visit. This is because the motivation of the agency is to recruit competent people to progress to assessment who have the potential to understand trauma and have the skills, experience and resilience to deliver therapeutic parenting.

The process of matching children's needs to foster parents' skills is carefully considered. However, on one occasion, a significant report was not provided to the agency prior to the child moving in. Since this time, the registered manager has implemented measures to ensure that all information is received prior to any child moving in.

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

Children are supported to feel safe and secure in their foster homes. Children have developed trust in their foster parents. This enables children to share any worries or fears that they may have. This means that foster parents have a good understanding of children's vulnerabilities and how best to meet their needs.

Staff and foster parents work together to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children. Foster parents feel valued, and both staff and foster parents advocate on behalf of the children. Children are also seen regularly by staff and build positive relationships with them.

Foster parents benefit from the therapeutic model that is embedded and runs throughout the service. The ethos of the therapeutic model of care used, supports staff and foster parents to use a trauma-informed approach to care. This supports foster parents to understand, manage and respond to children's needs.

Foster parents use their relationships and training to respond to children in a therapeutic manner to de-escalate situations. There has only been one occasion of a foster parent having to use a safe hold, which was deemed proportionate and necessary.

Clear and consistent boundaries within foster parents' homes contribute to children receiving predictable care and feeling secure. Children's achievements are celebrated. Praise is used regularly by foster parents to promote positive behaviours.

Foster parents receive training to build their skills and knowledge, particularly around safeguarding so that they can keep children safe. Health and safety procedures in the foster parents' homes are robust, clearly monitored, and up to date. This is helping children to stay safe.

There is a clear community of support within this agency. Foster parents value the agency's out-of-hours support. One foster parent said, 'I receive excellent support not only from staff but also other foster parents, which has supported us as new foster parents.'

A shortfall in the safer recruitment of one staff member and panel members has been identified. Some references have not been verified. The agency has actioned their own internal investigation into this.

Risk assessments outline children's risks. These are regularly updated to include children's changing circumstances and emerging risks. The manager should ensure that the children's individual risk management plan consistently gives foster parents clear strategies to mitigate and reduce risks.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is child centred, committed and devoted. She is currently completing the relevant management qualification. She is supported by a competent

and experienced operations manager, who both provide day-to-day supervision of the agency. The management team and the responsible individual all share the same vision of achieving positive outcomes for children.

Foster parents speak highly of the advice and support that they receive from the agency. They enjoy the bespoke and personalised service that they receive. Furthermore, foster parents have direct access to the experienced therapeutic team, which includes the lead clinical psychotherapist, when needed. One foster parent said, 'The therapeutic support we have received has been excellent and the clinical lead is as 'hands on' as all the other therapists.'

The agency is using a new technological system, which has not yet been fully embedded. However, foster parents have been complimentary of this system and said that it is easy to use. They have been able to contribute to the development of this system, which benefits their use of it. This new system also provides managers with good oversight and monitoring of the service.

The agency has clear expectations around language. On one occasion, a foster parent's records had not been written in a way that was helpful to children. However, this was an isolated event and not consistent with other records, which were child centred and captured the journey and day-to-day experiences of the child. This was immediately identified as a training need for the foster parents.

Some training resources use virtual headsets, which provide foster carers with a tangible impact of neglect and abuse through the eyes of a child. This provides carers with the opportunity to 'look' through the eyes of the child and experience their world. This helps foster carers to develop an empathic understanding of trauma and how this relates to difficult early childhood experiences.

The agency's staff and foster parents receive regular supervision, which is reflective, practice based and meaningful. All records are consistently good quality and are signed and dated. Foster carers spoke highly of the supervision that they receive and of the consultations that they receive from the therapists.

Managers and staff work collaboratively with other professionals to ensure that children's needs are suitably met. Professionals commented that communication between the agency is good. Social workers particularly benefit from the child's daily recordings that are sent to them, which are written by the foster carers.

Panel has been constituted without a vice chair being appointed. Panel members bring suitable skills, but, at times, demonstrate that they do not understand their roles and responsibilities to discharge the functions of panel to reach a recommendation about suitability to foster effectively. The quality assurance process is not always robust and panel minutes are not consistent.

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 must comply within the given timescales.

Requirements	Due date
<p>The fostering service provider must not—</p> <p>employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—</p> <p>and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that safer recruitment processes are in place for the verification of references for panel members and a supervising social worker.</p>	<p>26 April 2024</p>
<p>Subject to paragraph (5), the fostering service provider must constitute one or more fostering panels, as necessary, to perform the functions of a fostering panel under these regulations, and must appoint panel members, including—</p> <p>one or two persons who may act as chair if the person appointed to chair the panel is absent or that office is vacant ("the vice chairs") from the persons on the central list.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that the fostering panel has sufficient members, and that individual members have between them the experience and expertise necessary,</p>	<p>26 April 2024</p>

to effectively discharge the functions of the panel.
(Regulation 23 (4)(ii) (7))

In particular, the registered person must ensure the appointment of a vice chair at the constitution of the panel. Furthermore, panel need to ensure that the quality assurance process is robust, and that panel members understand their roles and responsibilities to effectively discharge the functions of panel.

The registered person must also ensure that panel minutes are consistent.

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that children’s safety and welfare are promoted in all fostering placements. In particular, the registered person should ensure that the child’s individual risk management plan consistently gives foster parents clear strategies to mitigate risks. (‘Fostering services: national minimum standards,’ 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: 2742835

Registered provider: Flourish Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: The Cedars, Holborough Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5PL

Responsible individual: Michelle Brunton-Douglas

Registered manager: Kathryn Hamblett

Telephone number: 0161 483 4769

Email address: mica.douglas@flourishfostering.co.uk

Inspector

Nicola Clements, Social Care Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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