

Banya Family Placement Agency

Banya Family Placement Agency Limited

Unit 1, 6 and 7, 286a-288 Croxted Road, London SE24 9DA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This fostering agency is a privately run organisation with a large geographical spread that supports children nationally. At the time of this inspection, the agency had 150 children living with foster carers and 117 approved fostering households.

The agency provides emergency, respite, short-term, long-term, sibling and parent and child placements, and staying put arrangements. A significant number of children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.

The agency registered with Ofsted in May 2002, and the manager registered with Ofsted in February 2021.

Inspection dates: 24 to 28 June 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **outstanding**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

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: 7 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The fostering agency provides high-quality care. Children develop secure attachments with their foster families and have a strong sense of belonging. Outcomes for children are excellent, and they have creative, positive experiences. Children make considerable progress from their starting points. This is particularly the case for children who are new to the UK and seeking asylum.

Children feel listened to. They are aware of how to make complaints, but generally do not do so. The agency routinely consults with children and arranges fun consultation events. This ensures that children share their views and have an influence in shaping the agency's services.

Children receive a children's guide which explains the purpose of the agency and what to expect. The agency has yet to devise a children's guide geared towards younger, primary school-aged children.

Children receive child-centred care that is tailored to meet their individual needs. The matching process is highly effective in matching children with foster carers who provide them with high-quality care. In one example, the agency promptly provided parent and child training to foster carers and facilitated an exemption to their approval status. This was to allow the foster carers to offer care to a child they already knew who had become a parent. This illustrates the agency's commitment to meeting children's needs well, despite unexpected changes in their circumstances.

Children's learning outcomes and general development are excellent. Many children have 100% school or college attendance and are making excellent academic progress. Children make significant progress from their starting points. For example, some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who spoke little English on their arrival in the UK have progressed to attend top-level UK universities. A child said of her learning ambitions, 'I wouldn't even be thinking about university if it hadn't been for my foster carers and [the agency's name].'

Children, foster carers and staff celebrate children's achievements, and their efforts are acknowledged and praised. Children regularly receive gifts and incentives to encourage them to achieve. The agency's participation team coordinates the agency's annual 'Breakthrough Awards' event, which acknowledges children's accomplishments. Children are excited about and very much look forward to this special celebration.

Children live healthy lifestyles. Foster carers and staff ensure that they promote children's physical, emotional and social well-being. Children have good access to primary healthcare services and receive advice and support from specialist services as required. Children with complex health and medical needs make significant improvement while living with their foster families. Foster carers work effectively

with the agency's therapist to support stable and secure placements when there are placement difficulties. Most children are in long-term or permanent placements.

Children's identity needs are well met by the agency. Foster carers and staff pay good attention to the impact of children's age, disability, cultural, religious and linguistic needs. Children receive support to safely explore their sexuality and staff and foster carers support children's access to appropriate LGBTQ+ resources. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are cared for by foster carers who have good insight into their traumatic experiences.

The fostering agency creatively prepares older children for adulthood. A range of innovative programmes led by the participation team support children to develop practical daily skills to help increase their independence. For example, this year, the team's focus with children has been on career development. Children were able to talk about a number of work placements that the team helped them to negotiate. Children work on perfecting their CVs and they role play job interview scenarios. The team's leadership programme recently explored with children what it means to be a child in care, and how to develop resilience and improve their self-esteem. Future programmes plan to focus on home economics and budgeting.

A number of young adults remain living with their foster carers in staying put or shared living arrangements. This allows them to remain living with their foster families and maintain existing relationships for continued support and guidance.

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

The fostering agency promotes children's protection, and they are kept safe effectively from harm and abuse. This is due to the agency's safeguarding internal board (SIB), a forum comprised of managers and senior staff that very closely monitors and devises action plans for any placement issue that is a cause for concern.

Effective plans are devised to support and promote placement success. Staff share all safeguarding concerns and incidents with SIB. This means that the agency has good awareness and oversight of all incidents, for example, when children go missing from home, are subject to or suspected of child sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation, substance misuse and offending behaviour. Staff regularly consult with members of the SIB for guidance and advice. The forum meets formally monthly to review safeguarding incidents or placement issues that are worrying.

Children's case files consistently contain written guidance from SIB, which makes clear the strategies and action to be taken to help reduce risks posed to children. This oversight is highly effective in supporting staff and foster carers to help keep children safe.

Foster carers are aware of the vulnerabilities of the children they care for. Risk assessments highlight risks posed to children and how these are to be managed.

Foster carers' safe care plans ensure that children are cared for safely in their homes. However, child-specific safe care plans do not consistently highlight the needs of individual children but merely reflect foster carers' household safe care plans.

Children benefit from the fostering service's clear child protection policies and procedures, which staff and foster carers strictly adhere to. Staff and foster carers complete comprehensive safeguarding training.

Foster carers set clear and consistent boundaries for children, which promotes children's positive behaviour. Foster carers use effective strategies to help to manage children's complex behaviour and to promote appropriate behaviour. Children benefit from the input of a therapist who works with foster carers to explore and help resolve placement difficulties. Social work assistants and the participation team work directly with children and provide placements with practical support, which also enhances placement success.

Incidents involving substance misuse by children, their involvement in child sexual and criminal exploitation and self-harm do not regularly occur in foster care placements. When they do, foster carers and staff take effective action to protect children. There is excellent communication between foster carers, staff, the police and local authority social workers, which helps to promote children's safety. When children are missing from home, foster carers take action that promotes children's safe return home.

The recruitment, assessment, preparation and support of foster carers have a strong focus on keeping children safe. The management of complaints and allegations against foster carers is robust and fair and has children's welfare at the centre of all investigations.

The fostering agency's recruitment and vetting of staff and panel members are robust and in accordance with safe recruitment practices. This ensures that staff are suitable to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are inspirational, confident and ambitious for children, and are influential in positively changing children's lives.

A suitably experienced and qualified registered manager manages the agency effectively and efficiently. The registered manager's influence enhances the agency's principles, ethos and high standards. Leaders and managers are dedicated to continuous improvement. For example, the registered manager is currently enrolled on an additional high-level leadership course to support innovative practice and creative leadership.

Leaders and managers create a culture of aspiration and positivity and they have high expectations of their staff, which improves the lives of children. Foster carers and staff understand these high standards and what is expected of them.

Staff and foster carers consistently say that they are supported by the entire management team, who genuinely care not only for children, but for staff, foster carers and their respective families. Staff and foster carers enjoy the agency's 'family feel' and the excellent care and support they receive from highly visible managers. There is a strong sense of togetherness that motivates the entire agency to strive for excellence.

Managers routinely track children's progress to ensure that children are reaching their full potential. When progress is not as expected, managers ensure that prompt and effective action is taken. There is excellent communication across the agency, which means that staff and foster carers are empowered to care for children in a way that enables children to live happy lives and to flourish.

The agency has highly effective monitoring systems to review the quality of care provided to children. The review of the agency's services is frequent, and quality of care reports are completed every six months. Managers devise plans that further develop and improve the fostering service. There is a learning culture at the agency, with managers continuously finding innovative ways of developing the staff and foster carers. For example, some staff are completing formal leadership and management courses.

The agency is well staffed, with robust systems in place to ensure that staff and panel members are suitably qualified and deliver high-quality services. Staff say that they can comfortably manage their workload, which helps them to model exemplary practice and provide effective support to children and foster carers.

The last inspection found that managers did not consistently inform Ofsted of significant events. This is an area identified for further improvement as some notifications to Ofsted are not forwarded as promptly as expected.

Training and development plans for both staff and carers are relevant, wide-ranging and often bespoke, to address the specific needs of children. These include foster carer training that explores risks posed to children. Staff and foster carers are encouraged to identify additional training for themselves, and leaders readily make funds available for this. For example, a member of staff has recently completed a therapeutic parenting skills course, while a member of the agency's administration team is completing a human resources management course.

The agency's fostering panel operates effectively. Its membership is drawn from a range of professional backgrounds. The fostering panel carries out clear and appropriate analysis of the work that is presented at panel meetings. Foster carers' assessments presented at the panel are of a high quality and clearly demonstrate an applicant's suitability to become an approved foster carer.

The fostering agency works very effectively with other professionals. There is close partnership working with children's social workers, independent reviewing officers and others. This ensures that children's identified needs are very well met and that children thrive and have incredibly positive experiences. An independent professional said of staff and managers, 'They are ordinary people who are extraordinary at their jobs.'

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
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1))	15 August 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, and how they can find out their rights. In particular, the registered person should produce a children's guide that is written for primary school-aged children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 16.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. This relates to the quality of some child-specific safe care plans and the quality and timeliness of some foster carers' daily logs. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)

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: SC033818

Registered provider: Banya Family Placement Agency Limited

Registered provider address: Banya Family Placement Agency Limited, 3rd Floor, 67 Wingate Square, Clapham Old Town, London SW4 0AF

Responsible individual: Nyasha Gwatidzo

Registered manager: Dorothy Shambambeva

Telephone number: 020 8678 5330

Email address: dorothe.shambambeva@banya.co.uk

Inspectors

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector
Thobekile Bandama, 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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