

Sparks Fostering

Social Work Enterprise Ltd

Flat B4107, 9 Owen Street, Manchester M15 4UG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency was registered with Ofsted on 13 February 2023. This was the agency's first inspection.

The agency offers a range of foster placements, including respite, long-term, short-term, and parent and child arrangements. Placements are provided by foster carers recruited by the agency.

At the time of the inspection, the agency was providing placements for three children and had two approved fostering households.

The agency's staff team is comprised of the responsible individual, a registered manager, one supervising social worker and one family support worker.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 September 2024

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| 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 | outstanding |

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: not previously inspected

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

The children have lived with their fostering families for a relatively short period of time. Despite this, children are clearly beginning to enjoy trusted and secure relationships with their foster carers, who have a clear understanding of their needs. Children are included in their foster family's lives. One foster carer said that they anticipate the child will remain with them long term under 'staying put' arrangements, as the child was now 'part of their family'.

Children are making good progress from their starting points. The care and support received by children from their foster carers enhances children's life chances. There is evidence of change and improvement for children because of the care that is provided by the foster carers.

Foster carers provide the children with a wide range of experiences and activities, in the foster carers' home and in the local community. This includes exploring new hobbies and interests.

Foster carers support children to spend time with those people who are important to them, when it is appropriate to do so. Foster carers drive children to family time and supervise when required.

Enquiries to the agency are screened thoroughly by the registered manager. There is a clear process in place for assessments, which are undertaken in a timely way. The registered manager has developed her own assessment format. Assessments are of good quality, with strengths as well as vulnerabilities appropriately explored and evaluated.

The process of matching a foster carer with a child is thorough. This includes collaborative working with the child's social worker to ensure that all the information about the child is shared with the foster carer before any decision is made about the placement. A detailed matching report is then completed by the registered manager, in consultation with the foster carers.

Children who are new in placement are welcomed sensitively and with care. In advance of any introductions, children are provided with a welcome booklet from the foster carers which contains a profile and photos of the carers and the things they enjoy. Introduction visits take place before the children move in.

Foster carers complete a daily journal from the time children move into their new home. It includes pictures and descriptions of daily events, using child-friendly language, as well as the child's views. This forms part of the children's life-story work.

Foster carers say that they feel valued and listened to. They feel confident in contacting the registered manager should their supervising social worker not be available and know that they can contact the agency at any time, day or night. The

agency also has a support worker who has recently started to work with one child, focusing on developing their independence and confidence.

Foster carers support the children's cultural and religious beliefs. This includes using interpreters and supporting the children to attend faith-based activities if they wish. The children's specific wishes are respected, even if these do not align with the foster carers' beliefs.

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

Foster carers' homes are safe, and children are protected from harm. Children are provided with a comfortable home environment and have all the equipment that they need.

All children's records, including risk assessments and safer care policies, are detailed. These are completed in consultation with foster carers and placing local authorities. They include all known risks as well as clear actions for the foster carers to follow.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from home, physical interventions, complaints or allegations. Safeguarding policies are available in several languages and audio versions are also available. The registered manager has devised well-thought-out questions for foster carers and staff to test their knowledge and understanding of all safeguarding procedures. Foster carers and staff demonstrate that they understand how to follow safeguarding procedures.

Safer recruitment processes are followed when carers are being assessed. This provides assurance that they are vetted as suitable to provide care to children. Ongoing health and safety checks are completed, including unannounced home visits. The supervising social worker visits the fostering families monthly, which ensures that children have regular opportunities to speak with a trusted person without their foster carers.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The registered manager has an ambitious vision for the service. There is a culture of high expectation and quality practice with a continual focus on improvement. The manager is passionate about her role and the outcomes for children. She has high expectations and is aspirational for children. She understands the service well.

Foster carers are actively encouraged to access training to help them meet the specific needs of the children in their care. Monthly workshops provide foster carers with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills, as well as providing peer support.

Panel is well attended and there is diverse mix of members. Panel minutes provide a detailed appraisal of panel business. Panel members attend team meetings and undertake training specific to their roles.

The oversight and scrutiny by the agency decision-maker (ADM) are good. The decisions made and the rationale for these are clear. The ADM, panel chair, registered manager and responsible individual meet regularly to review panel business. This is an opportunity to reflect on practice and identify lessons learned to continually improve practice.

The supervising social worker has regular reflective supervision with the registered manager that is focused on the needs of foster carers as well as the children's experiences and their plans.

Feedback from foster carers is that the regularity and quality of their supervision is good and that they value the opportunity to reflect on their practice. Records focus on the children's needs and their progress. Following formal sessions, there is ongoing communication between the registered manager, supervising social worker and foster carers via the agency's online tracking and monitoring system. This ensures that children's progress is constantly monitored and reviewed.

Foster carers have completed all required training and are clear about the expectations of them in regard to their training standards. Additional training is offered to carers to meet the children's specific individual needs.

Management oversight is evident throughout all case records. The registered manager has excellent oversight of the work and identifies tasks for the supervising social worker and foster carers, using the agency's monitoring and tracking system. Feedback from those using this system is that this is very helpful and ensures that tasks remain on track.

No requirements or recommendations were made during the inspection.

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: 2700371

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Responsible individual: Shehzadi Hamdani

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Inspectors

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