

Nurture Fostering Ltd

Nurture Fostering Limited

The Old Fire Station, 340 Lewisham High Street, London SE13 6LE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Nurture Fostering Limited is an independent fostering agency that was registered by Ofsted on 14 December 2017 and is operated by a limited company. The agency is based in the London Borough of Lewisham. The current manager was registered with Ofsted on 28 September 2021.

The agency offers a range of placements, including emergency, respite, bridging, parent and child, and short- and long-term placements for either individual children or sibling groups, including asylum-seeking children. The agency's primary aim as stated in its statement of purpose is to, 'give children the opportunity to achieve their potential and to live fulfilling lives within the community'.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 59 approved fostering households and 68 children living with approved foster carers.

Inspection dates: 21 to 25 October 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 **outstanding**

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

Date of last inspection: 24 May 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are making good progress in their foster homes. Some children have been matched with their foster carers in long-term placements to secure their futures and enhance their feelings of belonging and security. A social worker said of one such child, 'They have flourished in care with the boundaries and consistencies.'

Children are happy, they feel part of the fostering family and they form strong attachments to their foster carers. They are encouraged to give their views in a variety of ways. There is also at least one activity day a year, when children and their foster carers have an opportunity to meet with all the staff and managers of the agency at a relaxed social occasion.

Children are making good progress with their education, health, social presentation, emotional well-being and identity, with their foster carers advocating on their behalf when required.

Foster carers are very committed to supporting family time for children, even when arrangements are very frequent and challenging. Some foster carers have very good relationships with birth parents and work well together with them in the best interests of the child. One child's social worker said about the child's foster carer, 'The work she is doing with the child is impressive. She is thinking of the life-story book and writes beautiful little notes about daily routines with real love in them. This will make a real difference. She is meeting the child's needs to a really high standard.'

Matching is a real strength. The agency's placements team is very committed to making sure children are placed with carers who can meet their needs. The team is tenacious in obtaining as much information as they can from the local authority and sharing this with foster carers, thereby providing them with good insight into the child's needs and how to meet them. Feedback from local authority placements teams is incredibly positive about the agency's child-focused ethos. One placements officer said, 'They are very thoughtful and child-focused and really pitch in.'

Foster carers feel very welcome when they approach the agency for information about fostering. The assessments of suitability are usually carried out by independent assessors, and these are timely and of good quality. However, these are currently signed off by the responsible individual, who is neither the team manager nor a social worker. The formal oversight of these assessments and sign-off is an area for improvement, to ensure there is the appropriate accountability.

Foster carers speak very highly of their supervising social workers and benefit from regular and reflective supervision which enables them to provide a high standard of care to the children. This is enhanced by a comprehensive and relevant training programme. Additional training is provided to meet the specific needs of children, for example, those with an autism diagnosis. Foster carers said that the support and

training are 'exceptional'. There are regular support groups which provide foster carers with peer support as well as professional advice and guidance. In addition, male foster carers have their own support group, which they really value.

Foster carers are extremely positive about working for this agency. They feel valued and appreciated and this motivates them to meet the high standards and ethos of the agency. Their comments include: 'Communication with staff is brilliant,' 'They are available day and night,' 'All staff know the children very well,' and 'It's a small agency, and completely family orientated.'

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

The arrangements for helping children and ensuring that they are safeguarded effectively are good. Leaders and managers have strong and effective working relationships with other safeguarding professionals. Allegations of harm are reported promptly and appropriately. Feedback about the manager's communication and the agency's safeguarding practice is incredibly positive.

Supervising social workers attend local safeguarding training to increase their knowledge and understanding. They also attend and make valuable contributions to professionals' meetings, including strategy meetings. This promotes an effective, coordinated approach to safeguarding children.

Foster carers receive training in all aspects of safeguarding, including de-escalation and positive reinforcement, understanding the impact of trauma, first aid, safer care, allegations, child sexual exploitation and recognising grooming. They also have comprehensive written guidance in the foster carer handbook. This equips them with the skills and knowledge to respond appropriately to children's behaviours and risks. Foster carers and staff show a good understanding of how to minimise risk and they work well with partner agencies to try and keep children as safe as possible.

Risk assessments and safer care plans are thorough and updated to include current and emerging risks. This provides foster carers with appropriate guidance to equip them with the knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

Most of the children currently placed with this agency's foster carers do not go missing from their foster homes, but when risks are identified, these are managed well.

Children feel safe and secure in their foster homes. Positive and caring relationships ensure that children are able to talk to their foster carers if they are worried about anything. A placing authority manager said of a child's placement, 'I am amazed by the quality of the child's interaction and relationship with his foster mother. This is a very caring, nurturing and warm placement.' In addition, the supervising social workers speak regularly to the children and build trusted relationships so that they can also provide advice and guidance, both to the foster carers and the children.

Standards of care investigations are undertaken by independent social workers, which provides an additional layer of objectivity. The reports are very thorough and appropriately challenging and highlight useful points for learning. If shortfalls in practice are identified, the agency robustly addresses these with the foster carer. All standards of care issues are taken back to the fostering panel for an independent consideration of the foster carer's continuing suitability to foster. This promotes safer practice.

Staff, foster carers and panel members are recruited safely, in line with statutory requirements, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The responsible individual and registered manager are very child-focused and determined to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children who are cared for by the agency's foster carers. They both know the children and the foster carers exceptionally well, which enables them to identify and provide the support that they need.

Staff are extremely positive about working for the fostering agency and feel very well supported. They describe the leadership team as approachable, visible and available, as well as responsive to individual diversity needs. Communication is excellent, facilitated by weekly team meetings and reflective practice workshops that are so beneficial, helping the staff reflect on children and carers and how to progress any situations of concern.

Staff are exceptionally child-focused and committed, going above and beyond to support the children and foster carers. Foster carers and children's social workers speak highly of them. One child's social worker described a supervising social worker as 'a superstar'. Another child's social worker commented, 'They go above and beyond. They have put in loads of support. I cannot fault them.' They know the children well and are incredibly supportive and proactive in ensuring children and carers get what they need.

There have been significant improvements since the last inspection and all the requirements and recommendations made then have been addressed. Monitoring arrangements are strong and include regular and thorough reporting and feedback from foster carers and children. Areas for improvement and development are identified, with strategies to achieve these. Foster carers say that they are listened to and that they can approach the leadership team at any time. The agency is a learning organisation and is very reflective about how to improve when things have not gone as well as they should have, following complaints, incidents and unplanned endings.

All external professionals spoken to were positive about the agency and its child-focused approach. Communication is good, staff attend all relevant meetings and other professionals are kept informed. However, positive relationships do not prevent appropriate challenge, to ensure that children get the best possible service.

Foster carers' annual reviews are thorough, timely and carried out by an independent social worker, which provides an additional layer of independence and scrutiny.

The fostering panel is one of the agency's strengths and is well run. The panel chair is experienced and the panel membership is diverse, with a range of personal and professional experience of fostering. Panel members are thoughtful and well considered and carry out appropriate analysis of the work that is before them. The agency decision-maker is very experienced, understands the agency's strengths and vulnerabilities and makes timely and well-considered decisions.

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

Recommendation

- The written report on the person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer sets out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision-maker needs in order to make an objective approval decision. The reports are accurate, up to date and include evidence-based information that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. The reports are prepared, signed and dated by the social worker who assessed the prospective foster carer and countersigned and dated by the fostering team manager or a team manager of another of the provider's fostering teams. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.7)

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: 1265010

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Inspectors

Rosemary Chapman, Social Care Inspector
Dorothy Thompstone, Social Care Inspector

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