

# Clifford House Fostering

Clifford House Fostering Limited

Senate House, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove,  
Worcestershire B60 4AD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is a private limited company. The agency offers short-term, long-term, bridging and parent and child placements. At the time of the inspection, there were 39 approved fostering households providing care to 53 children.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since January 2022.

### Inspection dates: 16 to 20 December 2024

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

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

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:** 31 January 2022

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

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

This small fostering agency nurtures the foster family and their extended family and promotes their wider community, of which it plays a significant part. As a result, children make excellent progress and flourish. They develop a strong sense of personal identity and establish support networks that help them when they move on from their foster family or into adulthood.

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has used training and research to develop a bespoke therapeutic training and support package. Training has been delivered to all staff and is being rolled out to all foster parents. Reflective sessions, and more family-specific focused sessions, are being used to apply theories directly to a child and their family. Regular review of the development of the model within the agency takes place, and leaders and staff are thinking critically about the impact of the model. This has contributed to a reduction in unplanned endings for children and has enabled the development of foster parents' parenting skills.

Children build trusted and secure relationships with their foster families. The registered manager and staff work closely with a dedicated referrals team that sits within the wider organisation. It is in regular communication and has monthly meetings where vacancies and assessments are monitored and discussed. This has resulted in significant success in matching to the point that there are currently no vacancies.

The referrals officers are passionate about their role in finding homes for children. They work closely with foster parents to ensure that they have a clear understanding of their assessed skill sets and family make-up. Careful consideration is given to finding the right foster family for each child. The process identifies any potential shortfalls in the experience of the foster parents. They are then supported by the agency to ensure that they can meet the needs of the child.

Practice between the referrals team and agency continues to be developed. For example, a new checklist has been introduced to ensure that when a child moves out of their foster home and a vacancy becomes available, the status and any changes to that household are shared with the referrals team.

All children who are of school age attend education and follow full-time timetables. Foster parents and staff promote the importance of education and celebrate children's achievements. Supervising social workers support foster parents to advocate on behalf of their children. They attend all educational meetings alongside foster parents. This partnership work has resulted in diagnoses being reached and children having access to appropriate education facilities and resources. All children go on to achieve places at further education, training, university or employment. This shared ambition supports children to achieve their own aspiration, hopes and dreams for the future.

A key strength of this agency is how well foster children are integrated within families and establish positive relationships with birth children. Children see them as role models, and the normal family routine helps them develop their own. For example, one child, living in a family where three grown-up birth children are all teachers, described his own aspiration to be a mathematics teacher. This is an example of how relationships influence and inform children's life chances.

Children take part in a wide range of activities, hobbies and school clubs. These shared interests and engagement help children feel connected to their foster family and build relationships in their local community. This is enhanced by events and outings run by the agency. The registered manager has recently formed a specific partnership with a local farm that provides educational opportunities to children. She has linked the agency's therapeutic model and the farm's resources to run a series of well-received events for children and their families to increase children's engagement and enhance participation. Children and foster families value these opportunities to socialise, form friendships and develop their support networks.

Children's health needs are well met, and they are helped to lead healthy lifestyles. Foster parents support children to attend appointments. They work in partnership with health professionals to ensure that the specific health needs of children are met. For example, one child's earlier childhood experiences meant that they presented with some anxiety and would regularly request health intervention and support. The foster parent's parenting and sensitive approach has reassured the child and resulted in improved physical and emotional health.

Foster parents describe high levels of support from staff during periods of unexpected or severe illness faced by children in their care or members of their family. One foster parent stated, 'The supervising social worker was kind, empathetic and supportive throughout. Going above and beyond, taking calls any time of day or night regardless of her work hours, visiting us in hospital and just being there. I will not forget her kindness or the support of the agency during this very difficult time.'

Most children have long-term plans. Many have lived with their foster families for over two years. They have a wide range of opportunities to develop their self-esteem and feel heard, valued and celebrated.

Children are supported to successfully move on into adulthood, with some remaining with their foster family in 'staying put' arrangements. The registered manager has researched and is developing the theory of 'interdependence', rather than the narrative of 'independence' for children. This fits with the strong ethos of staff and foster families in promoting children's participation in their wider community and the value of building resilient friendships and social circles. This is also evidenced by how foster families remain in contact with children who have moved on from their home and how they continue to see them as part of the family.

The stability of families is excellent. The registered manager and staff are proactive in holding stability meetings to identify interventions to support foster parents and children where necessary. Managers proactively monitor unplanned endings and hold lessons learned meetings after any breakdown. Placement breakdowns are low and have continued to reduce since the last inspection and the introduction of the agency's specific therapeutic model. Patterns and trends are monitored by the registered manager, and learning from these reviews is fed back into practice.

The agency encourages foster parents to develop wider support networks for themselves and their children. When children require respite, they are cared for, where possible, by extended members of their foster family. This means that children are offered care from people they have an established relationship with. This approach promotes a family feel for the child.

When this is not possible, respite is well planned and organised by children's supervising social workers with other approved foster parents within the agency. One foster parent who provides this service stated, 'I can honestly say that each of the children placed in my care have been a pleasure to have. Sharing of information prior to the care taking place has enabled me to ensure needs are met and that they feel welcome and settle quickly without being overwhelmed. It really has been very rewarding having children return and seeing positive changes. Whether that be hearing about progress at school or home, or them being able to reflect on things that have happened and have them share with you what they have learned, and what they will change in the future.'

Foster parents feel welcomed into the agency. The recruitment of foster parents is carefully planned and supported by the wider organisation's central assessment team. It commissions secure base assessments to independent social workers who have been approved by the agency via a safer recruitment process. All assessments have a quality assurance process completed by the agency specific assessment manager. Panel members also complete quality assurance feedback forms for the assessment manager, which capture the compliance of reports and the evidence made available to support recommendations. All assessments and panels over the last 12 months have been completed within timescales.

The agency provides foster parents with regular supervision and supervising social work visits. An effective out-of-hours service means that foster parents can speak to a supervising social worker any time of day, should this be needed. Children and foster parents have positive, professional relationships with their supervising social workers, describing them as 'very understanding and accommodating', 'helpful and always there whenever needed' and that they have 'never criticised or made us feel anything other than professional in our role'.

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

The well-being and safety of children are paramount. Everyone throughout the agency has a clear understanding of their safeguarding role and responsibilities through regularly reviewed policies and procedures and informative training.

The registered manager responds promptly to safeguarding concerns and liaises closely with all relevant professionals. When there is a shortfall in practice by a foster parent, it is quickly and thoroughly investigated. Where appropriate, a post-allegation review is conducted. Panel is then convened to make a recommendation, and the agency decision-maker decides on continuing approval. This ensures that there is independent review of incidents as well as transparency and scrutiny about the practice of the registered manager and staff and ongoing approval of foster parents.

After serious incidents, there are wider organisation quality assurance reviews. These are detailed and look at practice and lessons that can be learned for this agency and, where appropriate, other agencies within the organisation's wider group. In one instance, this has led to specific safeguarding training being designed and delivered to all agencies as well as additional training being designed and delivered by the registered manager to this agency on disguised compliance. Signs of safety training has also been introduced within the agency, and this is being embedded in risk assessments for children.

Foster parents are skilled at supporting children who struggle to communicate their emotions and those who want to harm themselves or go missing from care. Incidents are low. For example, there have been no missing-from-care incidents in 2024. When action is required, the registered manager and staff team take appropriate and effective steps to help foster parents keep the child safe. Where appropriate, work is successfully completed with professionals to develop strategies that reduce the level of risk to the child.

Children have good relationships with their foster parents and staff and are able to go to them for advice and support. Children's views and wishes are listened to and acted on when appropriate. The agency focuses on ensuring that it works in a non-discriminatory way and is mindful of using language that cares in reports and day-to-day conversations.

Recruitment processes for new panel members, supervising social workers and independent assessing social workers are detailed and thorough. This ensures that all safe checks take place, which reduces the likelihood of children being at risk of harm from unsafe adults.

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

The registered manager continues to build on the clear values and ethos she has for the agency. She is developing and introducing practice based on reading, research and training. This approach inspires the staff team, whose members continue to develop their own learning and practice and hold the same high ambitions for the children and their foster families.

The leadership team, registered manager and staff have clear operational overview of the recruitment, assessment, approval and continuing approval of foster parents

and the impact this has on availability of foster homes for children. This effective monitoring means that there is a constant focus on the development of the service, staff well-being, support to foster families and quality of care and outcomes for the children. As a result of this focus, the timeliness of required actions is consistently high. For example, assessments, annual reviews, unannounced visits, foster parent and staff mandatory training and supervisions have been consistently 100% achieved over the last 12 months.

A skilled, stable and cohesive staff team provides considered tailored support for foster parents and children. For example, successful initiatives for new foster parents include invites to attend specific support groups with a focus on providing stable foster homes for children, and regular sessions that help them to complete their training, support and development standards within timescales.

The registered manager promotes a learning environment. Staff receive regular reflective supervisions and annual appraisals and have access to a programme of training that supports their continued professional learning. Personal development plans identify further areas for development and support access to additional training. For example, an administration member of staff is on the third year of her social work degree, two staff have recently completed a leadership and management qualification, others are becoming practice educators in social work and one is about to complete a course in therapeutic life-story work. The registered manager and staff team welcome and value social work students who undertake placements at the agency.

The panel chair and independent reviewing officer are experienced and ensure that they and panel members provide the agency with professional challenge and independence. Panel members are professionally curious and are making recommendations based on the strengths and vulnerabilities of foster parents. Panel members provide feedback to the registered manager on a regular basis about the quality of reports and presentations by social workers. The agency decision-maker makes well-informed and clearly evidenced final decisions.

Panel practice continues to be reviewed and developed based on the agency's learning and review. The introduction of returning foster parents to panel on a five-yearly cycle is providing an additional opportunity to gain more insight into the ongoing experiences of foster parents and children. This is in relation to the challenges they may encounter, but simultaneously is providing an opportunity to reinforce the positive input and difference they can make and to consider the impact of the support and supervision they receive from the agency. This is increasing the quality assurance role of the panel.

## **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:** SC416290

**Registered provider:** Clifford House Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** Malvern View, Saxon Business Park, Hanbury Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 4AD

**Responsible individual:** James McGarrigle

**Registered manager:** Lesley Greenfield

**Telephone number:** 01527 559366

## Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector  
Charlotte Love, Social Care Inspector



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