

Foundation Fostering Limited

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Acorn Business Centre, Office 7, Roberts End, Hanley Swan, Worcester WR8 0DN

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

A small private company owns this independent fostering agency. At the time of this inspection, there were 20 fostering households caring for 33 children. The agency offers short- and long-term, emergency and planned placements.

The manager was registered with Ofsted in January 2021. She is enrolled on a suitable management qualification programme.

Since the last full inspection, the agency has had three monitoring visits and one assurance visit.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 19 October 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 20 to 24 September 2021

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: 9 December 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection:

Two compliance notices were raised following the inadequate inspection judgement in December 2019.

A compliance monitoring visit on 3 February 2020 found that the responsible individual at that time had not taken sufficient action to meet all the required steps in both compliance notices. The two notices were reissued.

An off-site compliance monitoring visit was undertaken on 8 April 2020 to review the progress in meeting the compliance notices. The inspector found that the responsible individual had taken sufficient action to meet the two compliance notices.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children live in families where they receive good care and feel welcomed. When children talk about their foster carers, they describe a sense of belonging and inclusion in the family. Some children continue to live with their foster families under staying put arrangements. This commitment by foster carers helps children to develop essential relationship and life skills.

Foster carers provide children with experiences and opportunities to help them make progress from their starting points. During COVID-19 restrictions, children have enjoyed activities with their families such as den-building. A foster carer described this as an opportunity for younger and older children to play together outside. Foster carers encourage children to join clubs. One child attends a drama and singing activity, which increases her confidence. As a result, she has now been selected to take part in a school play.

Children receive individualised care and support from their foster carers. Foster carers use therapeutic parenting strategies, which are embedded into the care they provide to children. For one sibling group, this has reduced relationship difficulties, which included rough play when children hurt each other. Children are learning how to play appropriately at home, which also supports their ability to develop relationships at school. Children are making progress from their starting points because of the quality of care they receive from their foster carers.

Foster carers receive relevant training which develops their skills to care for children. An employed therapeutic lead delivers training in trauma-informed approaches to foster carers and supervising social workers. Although this roll-out is in its early stages, foster carers already describe having a greater understanding of children's experiences. This helps children to feel understood and supported.

An education and well-being officer attends education meetings and monitors children's attendance and attainment. She brings knowledge of education systems, which allows the agency to support children from a point of expertise. Children achieve well in school and have high aspirations. A number of children have acquired jobs and enrolled on college and university courses.

Foster carers join the agency because it promotes a family ethos and delivers high standards of personalised support to them and the children they care for. Prospective foster carers, including transferring foster carers, have thorough assessments to consider whether they are suitable to foster for this agency. Foster carers describe being considered with sensitivity by the assessor and the fostering panel.

Children joining the agency receive a welcome box from the family support worker, which includes the children's guide. Foster carers and the children report that they feel integrated into the family ethos of this agency.

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

Children placed with this agency make progress and reduce their levels of risk from their starting points. Supervising social workers know the children well, which helps them to identify potential risk at an early stage. They act swiftly to share information with partner agencies, such as school, to keep children safe.

The registered manager responds proactively to safeguarding concerns. For example, when there are concerns about standards of care, the agency refers to the designated officer. An independent reviewing officer conducts robust post-allegation, standards of care reviews and foster carer annual reviews. This provides an additional level of scrutiny which contributes to keeping children safe.

Supervising social workers create cohesive wraparound care. The therapeutic lead and family support worker contribute to effective therapeutic interventions to support the foster carers and child. One child commented that she usually moves placements after three months. She has now lived with her foster carers for 18 months. This demonstrates the impact of the support children receive to invest in their foster families, which in turn increases their ability to keep themselves safe.

Children have individualised risk assessments. The risk assessments do not always clearly evidence the strategies which are in place. This is because the supervising social workers have not always clearly described a behaviour management strategy or incorporated guidance from other risk assessments written by partners such as the child and adolescent mental health service. Although there has been no impact, this shortfall leaves carers and children vulnerable.

Staff and foster panel members are safely recruited. This means that all employed staff are suitable to work with children and adults. The registered manager does not oversee evidence in some recruitment files confirming an applicant's identity. This inconsistency means that the agency does not always demonstrate how safer recruitment in this specific area is assured.

The panel chair and agency decision-maker have extensive experience, skills and qualifications for their roles. The panel process is robust, which ensures that recommendations for suitability to foster and approvals are made after comprehensive consideration. This contributes to ensuring that children are placed with foster carers who will keep them safe.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This agency is led by a responsible individual and a registered manager who are ambitious to achieve the best outcomes for children and foster carers. They have a clear vision for the agency and they appoint staff who share these values. In particular, the new role of the therapeutic lead is fundamental in driving forward the trauma-informed, therapeutic approach that staff and foster carers want.

The registered manager is child focused and children's needs are at the heart of everything she does. For example, the registered manager has protected vacancies within one fostering household to help a child who needs a period of individualised care to stabilise mental health concerns. This is an effective strategy. The foster carer is committed to the child, who has stayed safe in her care.

The registered manager is visible to foster carers and children. She visits fostering households and sends cards to celebrate special occasions. The registered manager recently coordinated a family fun day, when activities included holding snakes and a tarantula. She also awarded certificates at the event in recognition of children's achievements. Children remember these occasions, which help them to create positive memories of their time in foster care.

The registered manager consults with children and their views are central to the development of the agency. The registered manager has developed new children's feedback forms, which are completed as part of the foster carer's annual review. Children helped to design the forms, which are more inviting and easier for children to fill in. This provides children with the opportunity to have their voice heard at their foster carer's annual review.

Leaders actively promote equality and diversity. The registered manager and panel chair have recruited new panel members. This provides a central list which is more diverse and represents the foster carers and children in this agency. The panel chair considers diversity in its broadest sense so that assessments of prospective foster carers demonstrate how they will meet the needs of children. This is further evidence of how this agency commits to enhancing children's day-to-day experiences.

The registered manager monitors the activity in the fostering agency and provides a monthly report to the responsible individual. The registered manager identifies shortfalls, such as children's statutory documentation which has not been provided by the placing authority. Although the supervising social worker requests the documentation, this is not escalated effectively or in a timely way. The registered manager has not reviewed the agency's escalation policy to ensure it is fit for purpose. While the agency has measures in place, including their own notes following statutory meetings, these documents should be in place to ensure that foster carers have relevant information and that the agency works in line with children's care plans.

Staff receive effective and regular supervision. All staff, without exception, value the support they receive. This approach means that carers can be supported to provide good care to children and sits within the therapeutic approach which the agency promotes. One child told inspectors, 'I think they all do an amazing job to help and support everyone around them.'

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(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (3))</p> <p>This is in relation to the registered manager escalating effectively when there are delays in receiving statutory documentation from the child's placing authority.</p>	<p>29 October 2021</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that a record of the recruitment and suitability checks is kept. This includes confirmation of identity checks carried out. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 19.3)
- The registered person should ensure that recording, including guidance in risk assessments on managing children's behaviour, is clearly expressed, signed and dated. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.6)

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: 1264335

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Inspectors

Joanna Warburton, Social Care Inspector
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