

Parent And Child Fostering Assessments

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

Unique reference number	1156149
Inspection date	06/06/2016
Inspector	James Harmon
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	

Setting address	Alfa House, Molesey Road, Walton-on-Thames KT12 3PD
------------------------	---

Telephone number	01932 226032
Email	info@parentandchildfosteringassessments.co.uk
Registered person	
Registered manager	Miss Oyeladun Areoye
Responsible individual	Mrs Bolanle Izilein
Date of last inspection	N/A

© Crown copyright 2016

Website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The agency is a new service that was registered in October 2015. The service offers parent and child foster placements. Independent parenting assessments are carried out during short-term placements.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: An agency demonstrating and exceeding the characteristics of a good judgement where children and young people are making significantly better progress and achieving more than was expected in all areas of their lives.

Good: An agency where children and young people, including those with the most complex needs, have their individual needs met and their welfare safeguarded and promoted. They make good progress and receive effective services so they achieve as well as they can in all areas of their lives.

Requires improvement: An agency that may be compliant with regulations and observing the national minimum standards but is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. It therefore requires improvement to be good. There may be failures to meet all regulations or national minimum standards but these are not widespread or serious; all children's and young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate: An agency where there are widespread or serious failures that result in children and young people not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome: **Good**

The agency is providing a good quality service that successfully meets the needs of the parents placed with their children. Since being registered eight months ago, the agency has grown to four placements. Three experienced carers have transferred from another agency, and an additional carer has been safely recruited by the agency.

The manager is developing the service slowly to ensure that the best service is being provided to each placement. The four placements that were reviewed on inspection consist mainly of mothers being placed with their new-born and infant children. One placement involves a young mother soon to give birth. In all instances, the local authority is involved and is undertaking assessments of each mother's capacity to parent. Some placements are under a child protection plan, while others are involved in court proceedings. The majority of the placements are new, within the three weeks prior to inspection, while one long-term placement will soon be concluding with a positive outcome of permanency for a child. Improvements need to be made in regard to the functioning of the panel and the

supervision of staff. However, the underlying issues do not have an adverse impact on any parents or children in placement.

The agency offers consistent advice and guidance to its foster carers. All placements are currently safe and are providing parents and their children with opportunities to develop positive relationships with their carers. The carers incorporate parents and their children into their wider family, ensuring that everyone is comfortable with the arrangements.

Everyone attached to the agency is benefiting from the hands-on approach applied by the staff. Carers, parents and professionals speak highly of staff and how they have contributed to each placement. They have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the agency and all matters relating to placements. A placing social worker said, 'The placement within the agency definitely meets the needs of both mother and child.'

Areas of improvement

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person(s) meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy in relation to radicalisation, which sets out the procedure to be followed (Regulation 12(b)).	28 October 2016
The fostering service provider must obtain such information as the fostering panel considers necessary and send that information to the panel, and provide such other assistance as the fostering panel may request, so far as is reasonably practicable (Regulation 25(3))	28 October 2016
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate supervision (Regulation 21 (4) (a)).	28 October 2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further, the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Fostering panels should have access to medical expertise and legal advice, as requested (national minimum standards, 14.6).

- The panel chair should ensure that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation (national minimum standards, 14.7).
- As far as is practicable, panel membership should be gender balanced and reflect the diversity of the local community (The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, volume 4, page 39, paragraph 5.8).

Experiences and progress of, and outcomes for, children and young people

Judgement outcome: **Good**

The mothers understand how long the placements with their children will last. They know what is expected of them and what level of support and monitoring will occur from the carer. The mothers and their children present as comfortable with the arrangements. They were all observed to be at ease in the presence of the carers during inspection visits. Positive relationships have been formed between the carers, the mothers and their children that enables them to settle swiftly into their placements.

Parents understand their rights and know how to complain if they have concerns or they are unhappy. A parent expressed a positive view of the placement for her and her child. She said, 'X (foster carer) always listens to me, we have our ups and downs, but she places my child first. I may not like it at the time, then we talk about it.'

Some parents have developed confidence and have improved in their parenting capacity with the assistance of the carer. This has contributed to them taking responsibility for any concerning historical behaviours that led to their being involved with the placing authority.

Parents and their children benefit from having their health needs supported by their carers. Carers often support parents by attending medical appointments with them and their children. They clarify any information that the mother may not understand and how it relates to their child. Children who have serious health issues benefit from the hands-on approach taken by the carers which ensures their health needs are met and their mother learns how best to achieve this.

When the placing authority makes a decision to end a placement, for whatever reason, the manager ensures that a detailed end of placement report is provided for each placement, which assists with the next steps of planning.

Parents and their children are included in the wider family of carers, and this

enhances their experience. They are made to feel welcome and are supported by extended family members of the carers.

Parents and their children benefit from the positive, supportive relationships between foster carers and their significant others. These relationships are well managed and in the child's best interest. The carers have successfully held contact visits in their home, and they have monitored this and fed back to the agency and local authority.

Quality of service

Judgement outcome: **Good**

The placements for the mothers and their children at the time of this inspection are stable and are not at risk of breaking down. The committed and skilled foster carers that are in place are child focused and cooperate effectively with the placing authority and professionals from other services.

The process of recruiting and accepting all the transferring and new foster carers was undertaken in a timely manner and relevant information was presented to the panel. The panel scrutinised all information made available, leading to sound approvals. Several applicants were determined by the manager not to be suitable and never made the assessment process.

The panel chair is new to her role, having previously acted as a panel member with another agency. The panel has only sat together on two occasions and the majority of its members have not previously been part of a fostering panel. The majority of the panel members have experience in social work. Some are former foster carers and others have experience as children looked after. The panel lacks professionals with expertise in the fields of health and education. The panel does not reflect the diversity of the wider community.

The panel minutes presented were brief and did not capture the details of the meetings in full. The chair and the manager agreed that an experienced minute taker needs to be recruited. Additionally, the agency was unable to evidence that recommendations made at the panel had been effectively followed up, such as clarification of specific dates, and training provided to carers.

The level of support available to the carers is a major strength of the agency. It allows them to be confident in their abilities. Excellent rapport has been developed between the supervising social worker, the registered manager and the carers. Carers described the staff as extremely helpful. A carer said, 'You can ring the office any time for advice or support.'

The foster carers are actively involved in the care for the children in their placement, providing a high level of supervision and hands-on care. A foster carer talked enthusiastically about being provided with a one-to-one reflective consultation with

the agency manager. The carer said, 'The consultation was very helpful; it allowed me to address a sensitive issue with the mother placed with me without offending her.'

Several parents require extensive support in looking after their children, due to having learning disabilities or mental health issues. The carers in these placements evidence a high level of skill and patience with parents. This approach has allowed children to thrive emotionally and physically.

The training provided to foster carers is still being developed for foster carers new to parent and child placements. The management of the agency is administering the majority of the training one-to-one. Carers believe that the training they have completed so far is purposeful. They appreciate that training is provided alongside agency staff, which allows them to discuss and clarify issues as they learn.

The carers have the support of each other as well as the agency. They routinely get together to discuss their experiences while learning from each other.

The agency works very well with the local authority by preparing and supporting carers in their contributions to reviews regarding the care of parents and children.

Safeguarding children and young people

Judgement outcome: **Good**

Appropriate action is undertaken by the agency and carers to ensure that children remain safe, including those children yet to be born. Parents adhere to the rules and boundaries of their placements, resulting in their children not being at risk. The agency has a safeguarding policy that covers issues such as missing from care and allegations against carers, but it does not offer any guidance on radicalisation for carers and staff.

There has been a positive response by the carers and the agency when parents go missing from placements, specifically those with unborn children. Action is taken by the carer to engage the mother and help her understand how she is placing her unborn baby at risk. The carer and agency continue to monitor the situation assessing the impact on the unborn child. If the mother continues to place her child at risk, the agency proactively engages with the placing authority ensuring that effective action is taken to manage this.

Risks associated with parents and their children are clear to carers. Risk assessments and safer care agreements are completed with the input of the parents, carers and the staff. These documents are updated as needed. Routine visits are undertaken to each placement along with unannounced visits.

Safeguarding training has been provided to everyone at the agency. The staff and carers are confident when dealing with incidents of safeguarding, and know what action needs to be undertaken when necessary. Records indicate that there is

effective communication between the agency, police and placing authorities when needed.

The recruitment practice for new staff is sound. All staff, carers and panel members have been recruited safely. References are sought and verified, along with clear background checks. All probation periods are being effectively monitored.

Leadership and management

Judgement outcome: **Good**

The registered manager displays a high level of professionalism. She is very passionate about the agency and the service it provides. She has effectively established working relationships with placing authorities, which, in turn, have positive views of the agency. A commissioning officer, said, 'There are no current concerns for the agency, nor have any been raised.'

The manager provided evidence that showed that she had great insight into each placement while successfully providing information on all queries. The development plan highlights the areas of improvement for the agency, including increasing the number of carers.

The statement of purpose is clear and reflects the agency's ethos, policies and procedures. The placement guides for parents and children provide information about the service that is easily understood. The views of all parents in placements are evidenced throughout their records. They feel that their views have contributed towards the care and assistance provided to them and their children. A mother in placement said, 'The agency has been very supportive of her child, herself and the carer.'

The agency is appropriately staffed and resourced. The monitoring of the agency has been sound. Notifiable events are appropriately reported to all relevant agencies, including Ofsted. Updates are provided promptly as events unfold, and effective action is taken.

The agency's staff are suitably qualified. They believe that the agency is making good progress while they are developing as a team. Team meetings are held monthly to review their practice and placements and to develop any new ideas.

The training that is provided to all attached to the agency contributes towards their assigned roles and development. The regular supervision that is provided to the supervising social worker does not evidence her views and reflection on her practice. The responsible individual is not having, and has yet to identify a suitable person to provide her with, supervision.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to inform children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards, and to support services to improve.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of independent fostering agencies.