

Parent And Child Fostering Assessments

Parent And Child Fostering Assessments Ltd

Alfa House (in the yellow storage building opposite the Rugby club), Molesey Road, Walton-on-Thames KT12 3PD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The service offers parent and child foster placements. Independent parenting assessments are carried out during short-term placements.

The manager has been registered with Ofsted since June 2015.

At the time of this inspection, there were nine children placed with the agency and 14 approved foster carers.

Inspection dates: 18 to 22 December 2023

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 24 April 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: Following the inadequate inspection in April 2023, two compliance notices were issued. These were deemed to have been met following a monitoring visit completed on 13 June 2023.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Foster carers provide comfortable homes for children and their parents. They work closely with agency staff and others to fully support the parenting assessment process. Foster carers develop nurturing relationships with children and babies. This role models good parenting, and supports parents to develop the skills and strategies needed to parent successfully. For one parent, this increased knowledge gave them the opportunity to take their child out without supervision.

The support offered by foster carers and agency staff encourages positive outcomes for families. Some return home with support in the community. Where this is not the case, children's permanence is achieved via other routes, such as adoption. Whatever the outcome, parents were positive about the agency and describe the supportive nature of foster carers in helping them to understand being a parent.

The foster carers are committed to their role and embrace challenge. They develop mutually respectful, supportive, honest and transparent relationships with parents. Consequently, foster carers build trust with parents. This enables foster carers to provide parents with the necessary support. As a result, one parent said, because they feel valued and heard, they have learned how to now react positively in times of emotional stress. Another parent, because of the support they had received from the foster carer, felt able to not return to an abusive relationship.

Foster carers say they are well supported, especially at times when relationships with parents are difficult and challenging. Outside office hours help is accessible to all foster carers and parents. This support helps address any issues quickly and increases the stability of families throughout the assessment process.

The foster carers and agency staff maintain good communication with local authority social workers and other professionals. They ensure effective information-sharing to support the local authority in their decision-making.

Proactive foster carers encourage parents to support their children to attend nursery. This has enabled parents to build new and positive relationships. Likewise, children increase their confidence and social skills. As a result, the assessment becomes a natural process that parents say they have found rewarding.

Birth children of fostering households can express their views of fostering through the implementation of the agency children's forum. Fostering staff use creative ideas to gain feedback, which means that the views of children of all ages are gained.

Assessments are undertaken by independent assessors. The manager ensures that these are of good quality.

Families living with foster carers have diverse backgrounds. Foster carers recognise the importance of, and are considerate to, parents and children's religious and cultural needs. Foster carers and agency staff support parents to ensure that these needs are met.

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

Staff and managers understand their role to safeguard children and families in their care. They know what to do in the event of an allegation against a foster carer or parent.

Agency staff, managers and foster carers understand the risks for children, both inside and outside of the home. Risk assessments and safety plans for each parent and child are updated regularly. As a result, there is clear guidance for foster carers, and parents are supported to develop improved independence and safety skills without constant supervision.

Foster carers are intuitive and raise awareness of any parenting concerns via their supervising social worker or the manager. The manager is proactive in escalating any parenting concerns. Clear, documented evidence is shared appropriately with the local authority of these concerns. The registered manager is tenacious if professionals do not adequately address these concerns.

The manager ensures that any allegations or concerns regarding foster carers' practice are subject to comprehensive investigation. Learning from these investigations is shared in team management meetings. However, agency records do not always fully evidence the management oversight of parenting concerns or allegations against carers.

Foster carers have welcomed recent training in mental health and drug misuse. This has re-energised their curiosity and understanding. Foster carers have increased knowledge to better support parental mental health or drug misuse as a result.

Supervising social workers understand risk and how to support foster carers managing this. However, the supervision they provide to foster carers has a limited structure and lack of purpose. This does not stimulate wider professional curiosity. Consequently, opportunities to assess and evidence the carers' performance, and further develop their safeguarding competencies and skills, are potentially missed.

The manager ensures that all significant events are notified to the regulator and relevant professionals. However, the quality of information provided is variable.

The manager ensures that safer recruitment good practice standards are met for all people who work for the agency. New workers who have joined the agency from outside the UK are subject to appropriate additional suitability checks.

Relevant and necessary checks are completed in respect of other adults who live in the fostering household. This reduces the likelihood of a parent or child being exposed to unsafe adults.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The fostering agency is managed by a committed and enthusiastic registered manager who has a sound knowledge base and good understanding of each parent and child placement.

The senior leadership team is small but functional. The responsible individual provides supervision and line management to the registered manager. The manager's supervision is of suitable quality but is not sufficiently frequent to provide clear ongoing oversight of the fostering agency.

Supervising social workers visit the foster carers regularly. They know them and the parents and children they care for well. These staff receive regular supervision. However, the lack of challenge regarding repeated actions, professional curiosity and limited reflection do not encourage staff development and growth.

There are appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision and management of permanent staff who have personal connections to senior management. These show a clear framework and purpose of supervision.

The fostering panel and agency decision-maker make good-quality, appropriate recommendations and decisions. These provide direction to the agency to ensure that foster carers maintain expected standards. As a result, the overriding objective to promote the welfare of children in foster care is met.

The effectiveness of the fostering panel is quality assured annually. The panel and agency managers maintain a collaborative approach, providing direction and learning across the whole agency, for example making improvements such as to the quality of training.

The manager has not ensured that there are effective monitoring systems or quality assurance processes that ensure high standards of daily practice. Records are of inconsistent quality and contain errors. The noted errors were addressed through discussion with the registered manager during the inspection.

The registered manager has created and implemented a comprehensive action plan following the previous inspection. The positive changes, increase in staff and foster carers' training and significant overall improvement mean that all requirements made at the last inspection have been met.

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, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them— receive appropriate training, supervision, and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))	28 June 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure that the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.8)
- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.1)
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. ('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: 1156149

Registered provider: Parent and Child Fostering Assessments Ltd

Registered provider address: Alfa House (in the yellow storage building opposite the Rugby club), Molesey Road, Walton-on-Thames KT12 3PD

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Inspector

Jill Sephton-Wright, Social Care Inspector

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