

Hatols Fostering Service

Hatols Fostering Services Limited

55 Jasmine Court, Anerley, Bromley SE20 8JY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Hatols Fostering Services Limited is an independent fostering agency that registered with Ofsted on 10 October 2016. The current manager registered on the same date.

The office is based in the London Borough of Bromley. It provides emergency, short-term, bridging, long-term and parent and child placements for either individual children or sibling groups, including asylum-seeking children.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had seven approved fostering households, comprising nine foster carers, and seven children.

Inspection dates: 19 to 23 February 2024

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: 28 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Foster carers are very committed to the children in their care and want the best for them. One foster carer said of her role, 'I want to take good care of them and want them to feel at home and be comfortable.'

Children benefit from a sense of belonging. The care and support they receive helps them to make good progress. Children are positive about their foster carers. One child said, 'She treats me very well.' Another child commented, 'It's really good here and I've noticed improvements in myself.'

Foster carers also build positive relationships with children's parents and the foster carers of children's siblings. One parent said, 'My child is doing really well there. The foster carer is really nice, and really good at communicating with me. The home is lovely and friendly.' Consequently, children maintain positive relationships with people who are important to them, and they are supported to see family and friends.

Children are encouraged to go to school and do well in education. Some children have significantly improved their attendance, with one child's attendance up from 62% to 95%. Attainment has also improved for some, with one child going up two grades in school. Foster carers understand the value of education and do their best to encourage children to engage. The foster carers and the agency are proactive in taking part in any meetings or discussions to improve school attendance and engagement if this is not going as well as it could.

Children also make progress with their general health and well-being. Foster carers ensure that children attend routine dental and optical appointments and see a doctor if they are unwell. Children are encouraged to take pride in themselves, and as a result they are more confident and self-assured. They are also encouraged to gain independence skills by, for example, doing some cooking and keeping their bedrooms clean and tidy.

Children are encouraged to take part in activities and to contribute to the community. The agency provides children with a sum of money each month that they, along with their foster carer, use to buy an item for a local foodbank. This promotes a sense of social responsibility and helps the children to feel part of the community. Children also do activities such as football, cricket, cadets, bowling, going to the gym and meeting friends.

Children's cultural needs are met. They attend places of worship if they wish to and foster carers ensure that children have prayer mats and appropriate food.

The agency arranges annual trips for all children who are part of the fostering agency. This gives them the opportunity to meet other fostered children and have an enjoyable time. The social work assistant also does activities with children, such as

going shopping or to the cinema, to get to know them and establish trusting relationships.

The agency is keen to know the views of children. The social work assistant is specifically employed to engage with children and to ensure that they are happy and having their needs met. The registered manager also sees this as part of her role, together with the supervising social worker, and both ensure that they see children alone to find out their views. Children said they felt they could talk to someone if they had any concerns, usually citing their foster carer as that person. The agency provides children with a child-friendly complaints card with numbers they can call if they have a complaint. For those children whose first language is not English, this is translated into their language. Children's complaints are taken seriously and acted on.

Children are generally well matched to their foster carers. There is a well-thought-out approach to information-gathering, information and detailing how children's needs will be met. Information is shared with foster carers and they feel under no pressure to accept a child if they are not confident that they can meet the child's needs. One local authority commissioning officer said, 'The agency is very careful in terms of foster carers being able to meet children's needs and matching. They have done a great job. We have positive, successful placements.'

However, on one occasion, a child was placed alongside another child in a foster home without the placing authorities being informed or consulted before the placement was made. It is important for placement stability that the social worker of any child currently placed knows they have the right to object if they feel the placement of another child may impact negatively on their child, and that these views are taken into account.

There has been very limited recruitment of foster carers in the last year. However, the most recent assessment was thorough and evidence based. Assessments are timely and foster carers describe the agency as welcoming. Foster carers undertake relevant training as soon as possible so that they can provide good and safe care.

Foster carers feel well supported by their supervising social workers and the registered manager. They can contact the registered manager at any time, including out of hours. Foster carers have regular supervision and receive good-quality, relevant training. This enables them to provide good care and support to the children. Foster carers feel valued and say that the agency listens to their views. For example, support group meetings have increased from three to four a year as a result of consultation. Comments from foster carers include, 'Working with Hatols is a dream,' and, 'It is just like a little family.'

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

Children are settled in their foster placements. Most of the children currently living with this agency's foster carers are not engaging in risk-taking behaviour, such as going missing from home or misusing illegal substances. Foster carers know how to

respond appropriately to risk as they receive relevant training on safeguarding issues and have access to support and written information. Recent training has included safeguarding, safer caring, substance misuse and the 'Prevent' duty. Children's known and emerging risks are documented and the risk assessments are reviewed regularly. This ensures that foster carers have clear written guidance to follow to keep children safe from harm.

Safeguarding practice is good. If there are any safeguarding concerns, there is good communication between the agency and the child's social worker to ensure that appropriate action is taken and support is accessed. Professionals' meetings are used to share information and agree a plan to ensure that there is a consistent response. Children say they feel very safe in their foster homes. When a child was asked if she felt safe, her response was, 'very much so'.

Foster carers fully understand their responsibilities if children go missing or are absent without permission from their home. They follow the missing-from-home procedures and inform the relevant out-of-hours team. Foster carers say they feel well supported and somebody from the agency is always available to talk to them, whatever the time of day. The number of times children have gone missing from their foster homes has reduced.

Foster carers have training in managing challenging behaviour and de-escalation techniques. There have been no incidents of physical restraint. Carers understand that building positive relationships is a key aspect of providing safety and security. They have received training to help them understand trauma and how to respond to children's behaviours. There have been no allegations in the last year. The registered manager is aware of her responsibilities and would liaise with the local authority designated officer should any allegations be made.

Staff and panel members are recruited safely, in line with statutory requirements. In addition, foster carers receive unannounced visits at least annually, carried out by the manager to provide an additional level of independent scrutiny.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency has a registered manager who has been in post since the agency was registered. She is passionate about providing a good service to children as well as meeting the needs of local authorities. The registered manager is keen to take advice, learn from mistakes and reflect on practice if situations of concern should have been managed differently.

Staff feel well supported. They receive regular supervision that enables them to reflect on their practice. Their performance is regularly appraised, and this informs their development needs. Staff have access to a range of relevant, good-quality training that enables them to improve their knowledge and practice to support the foster carers and children effectively.

Management oversight is good. There is oversight of files and a system for monitoring. The registered manager also undertakes her own visits to children and carers to seek an independent view of how the placement is progressing. There is good communication with other professionals and challenge when necessary. On some occasions, local authorities have not provided a copy of the latest looked after review minutes and the agency has not followed this up further. It is important that these documents are available on children's files so that foster carers know the up-to-date plan for children and can provide appropriate care and support.

The review of the quality of care could be improved. The annual report does not include the views of carers, children or social workers, although these are sought throughout the year. In addition, the report does not contain sufficient detail about how the registered manager intends to improve and develop the service. These additions would make this report a more useful and meaningful document.

The agency takes complaints seriously and investigates them thoroughly. However, the manager has not notified Ofsted of the most recent complaints. As a result, the regulator did not have full information about the service to ensure it was operating safely and effectively.

Foster carers feel very well supported by the agency. They receive regular recorded supervision from their supervising social worker that has a focus on how the children they care for are achieving the best outcomes possible. There is challenge and debate as well as support. All annual reviews are carried out within the required timescales by an independent reviewing officer, and if there are concerns, the foster carers will be taken back to the fostering panel to have their suitability reconsidered.

There is a properly constituted fostering panel chaired by an appropriately skilled and experienced independent person. It is administered well, and panel members receive documents in good time so that they can consider them properly in preparation for the panel. The fostering panel provides robust oversight of the work of the agency and acts as a critical friend to promote safe carers and safe placements that meet children's needs. Its membership comprises people with a range of relevant personal and professional experience, including a care-experienced person, a foster carer and members with experience of housing and education services. Panel provides both support and challenge, and the agency is very responsive to any suggestions made to improve practice, for example, making more effort to seek the views of other professionals to inform foster carer annual reviews.

The agency's decision is made in a timely way and takes into account all the information available. As the responsible individual carries out the role of decision maker, it provides her with additional valuable insight into the operation of the agency.

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 registered person must maintain a system for— monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority. The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3))	30 April 2024
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be confirmed in writing. (Regulation 36 (1) (2))	30 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there is careful pre-placement planning, including consideration of the impact on any children already living in the foster home. Consent to such a placement must be given by the fostering service provider and any other responsible authority with a child already placed with the

foster carer. This will require consultation with the social worker of any other child placed in the foster home. ('The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volume 4: Fostering services', page 14, paragraph 3.2)

- The registered person should ensure that the foster carer is given a copy of the child's placement plan as soon as this is provided to them by the responsible authority. If provision of the care plan by the responsible authority is delayed, the fostering service should follow this up with the responsible authority. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 31.2)

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: 1222039

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Inspector

Rosemary Chapman, Social Care Inspector

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