

Hatols Fostering Service

Hatols Fostering Services Ltd (Co Number 08016114)
5 Sandringham Road, Bromley BR1 5AR
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Hatols Fostering Service is an independent fostering agency that has been registered with Ofsted since November 2015. The office is based in Bromley, Kent. This is the agency's first Ofsted inspection. The fostering agency aims to provide placements for individual and sibling group placements, on emergency and short and long-term placements.

The agency's statement of purpose identifies one of the service's key aims as 'to provide a high standard of substitute family care for children and young people, acknowledging the individuality of the child taking their cultural needs into account'.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had two approved fostering households with one young person in placement.

Inspection dates: 24 to 28 September 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good

The independent fostering agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: N/A

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency requires improvement to be good because:

- Managers do not maintain clear records of complaints. Complaints are not responded to in line with policy and procedures.
- The fostering panel does not offer consistent levels of scrutiny or monitoring.
- The registered person does not always demonstrate that they have considered the panel's recommendations seriously.
- Important documents, including the statement of purpose and the children's guide, are not up to date or used effectively.
- Staff do not complete good enough matching and assessment processes prior to placing children with foster carers.
- The agency fails to thoroughly assess all prospective foster carers' capacity to provide safe care and promote children's safety. This increases the risks to children's safety.
- Quality assurance is weak.
- Leaders do not have systems and processes in place to monitor the progress and experiences of children.

The independent fostering agency's strengths:

- Children make good progress and have positive experiences.
- Children can express their views and opinions and they influence the day-to-day care that they receive.
- Children are generally safe.
- The support and supervision of foster carers is good.

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
The fostering service provider must— Keep under review and where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children's guide, Notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days and if the children's guide is revised, supply a copy to each foster parent approved by the fostering service provider, and to each child placed by them (subject to the child's age and understanding. (Regulation 4(a)(b)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must review the statement of purpose and children's guide to ensure that both documents contain the correct information.	31/12/2018
The fostering service provider must promote the educational achievement of children placed with foster parents. In particular, the fostering service provider must— Implement a procedure for monitoring the educational achievement, progress and school attendance of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 16(1)(2)(a))	31/12/2018
The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 18(4))	31/12/2018
The registered person must ensure that when a person ("X") applies to become a foster parent and the fostering service provider decide to assess X's suitability to become a foster parent, any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation. Where the fostering service provider have obtained all the information set out in paragraph (1A) and have not given the notification in paragraph (1B) within 10 working days of doing so, the fostering service provider must— prepare a written report on X which includes the following	31/12/2018

matters— the information required by Schedule 3 and any other information the fostering service provider consider relevant, the fostering service provider's assessment of X's suitability to be a foster parent. (Regulation 26(1)(2)(3)(c)) Specifically, the registered person must seek to obtain clear and detailed information about any substantiated allegations and concerns regarding the standard of care that any other fostering services are willing to share about the prospective foster carers, ensure that this information is considered carefully and ensure the quality of the assessments of X's suitability to be a foster parent.	
A fostering service provider must, in deciding whether to approve X as a foster parent and as to the terms of any approval, take into account the recommendation of the fostering panel. (Regulation 27(3))	31/12/2018
The registered must maintain a system for— Monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and Improve 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. (Regulation 35(1)(a)(b)(2)(3))	31/12/2018

Recommendations

- The fostering service must ensure that children can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support, without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. (National Minimum Standards 1.6)

In particular, ensure that the complaints system is easily accessible to children and young people.
- The fostering service's written report on the person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer must set out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision maker needs in order to make an objective approval decision. The reports must be accurate, up to date and include evidence based on information that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third party information. The reports must be prepared, signed and dated by a social worker who assessed the

prospective foster carer and countersigned and dated by the fostering team manager or a team manager. (National Minimum Standards 13.7)

- The registered person's system for recruiting staff and others includes an effective system for reaching decisions as to who is to be appointed and the circumstances in which an application should be refused in the light of any criminal convictions or other concerns about suitability that are declared or discovered through the recruitment process. (National Minimum standards (19.5)
- The fostering service must ensure that any staff involved in assessing the suitability of persons to be foster carers are social workers, have experience of foster care and family placements work and are trained in assessment. (National Minimum Standards 23.6)
- The registered person takes action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which are raised with them. (National Minimum Standards 25.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

This fostering service was registered with Ofsted in November 2015 and this is the service's first inspection since its registration. The fostering service has had a variable start in meeting the placement needs for young people. Some young people make good progress while living with their foster carers. Placements are secure and stable, and young people's individual needs are well met. However, a vulnerable young person has been removed on an emergency basis due the agency's failure to share significant safeguarding information with the placing authority. This was a planned placement, where the young person had settled well, attended education and had begun to form an attachment with the foster carer. As a result, a young person experienced unnecessary trauma.

Some young people are looked after well by their foster carers. This contributes to them forming positive attachments. A foster carer was observed to be vigilant and attentive to the needs of a young person, ensuring that he was kept safe around the house and stimulated through play and conversation. A young person describes his foster carer as 'kind, listening and does not force me to eat food she knows I dislike'.

Practice has been good in relation to matching young people with foster carers who have the experience and knowledge to meet their cultural and day-to-day needs. Young people are cared for in accordance with written care plans, which are kept updated. Young people are well cared for by foster carers who understand their identified needs and how best these needs can be met. An education head of year commented, 'From the start of this new term, we can see a change in X's behaviour. He is more attentive in the classroom and the number of detentions handed out has somewhat decreased. We are very pleased to see the improvement in his care and the foster carer's openness to working with the school.'

Young people were observed to be relaxed and at ease with their foster carers. Carers have the skills to enable young people to feel part of their family. They engage them in day-to-day routines and in helping with practical tasks. Carers provide a range of opportunities for young people to practise skills for independence. Foster carers negotiate age-appropriate boundaries that provide a good balance between staying safe and enabling young people to take appropriate risks and planning for special events and leisure activities.

Not all the young people spoken to during this inspection were aware of how to make a complaint if they are unhappy about their care. The complaints process is not easily accessible or understandable. The children's and young people's guide advises them to contact the registered manager if they wish to complain. The guide would be strengthened by including the contact details for the external support agencies listed. The manager confirmed that the children's and young people's guide is currently being updated.

Children and young people benefit from having well-planned contact with their families where appropriate. Carers are familiar with these plans and prepare children for these visits, considering the likely emotional impact on them. Carers maintain

positive relationships with parents where it is appropriate to do so. Carers feel well supported by the agency in resolving any difficulties that arise because of contact arrangements.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Young people spoken to during this inspection said that they feel safe in their foster homes and would feel comfortable speaking to their carers about any worries or concerns they may have.

The quality of risk assessments and behaviour support plans is good. Behaviour support plans have considered how known behaviours of some young people could impact negatively on other young people. Risk assessments clearly identify what strategies will be put in place to minimise the potential for young people coming to harm.

Assessments of foster carers are an area of weakness as they do not have a good enough focus on safeguarding. The agency failed to thoroughly assess all prospective foster carers' capacity to provide safe care and promote young people's safety. The fostering panel chairperson stated that assessment reports do not always provide sufficient information and analysis to enable the panel members to conclude that the potential carer would be suitable for the role. However, the panel has made approval recommendations where full information was not available to them.

Assessments of foster carers who have previous early years childcare experience do not consider all information that is available. This includes de-registration, previous substantiated allegations of inappropriate care, and failures to share serious safeguarding information on friends who access the family home. The agency has also failed to report significant information to placing authorities in a timely manner. This resulted in the emergency removal of a vulnerable young person.

Foster carers spoken to during the inspection were unanimous in their praise for the assessment and preparation phase of their fostering career. Carers felt well supported during their induction and benefited from relevant training. This includes training focused on keeping young people safe, including recognition of signs and symptoms of exploitation of young people.

There have been no concerns in relation to children and young people going missing from their foster homes. Foster carers understood the procedures they should follow in the event of a child or young person going missing.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Young people benefit from the fostering service's clear and comprehensive child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures. Foster carers receive training that focuses specifically on safe caring and each household has a written safe caring family policy in place.

Leaders and managers now recognise the importance of building transparent and

open relationships with partner organisations. However, consultation and information sharing with some placing authorities has not always taken place in a timely manner. As a result, young people have been forced to accept the trauma of an emergency placement ending. The registered manager is taking steps to ensure that professional relationships with partner agencies are more productive.

Quality assurance in this agency is weak. At the time of this inspection, the registered person and the manager were not familiar with the need to undertake quality of care reviews and provide the chief inspector with a report. Consequently, no review reports have been submitted to the regulator.

The agency has a realistic business development plan, including an effective strategy to attract and secure a larger pool of foster carers. This is important if the service is to meet its aims to provide foster care placements that meet the diverse needs of looked after young people.

The fostering panel is constituted appropriately. The panel is diverse, with members each bringing a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role. The panel has an effective chairperson. However, due to the low numbers of panel members, should one person not attend, the panel would not be quorate.

Staff are suitably qualified and experienced to undertake their specific roles. Staff receive regular supervision which enables them to reflect on their practice and professional development needs. The agency provides an appropriate training programme for staff and carers and panel members relevant to the needs of young people. This is generally well received.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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

Juanita Mayers, social care inspector



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