

Hatols Fostering Service

Hatols Fostering Services Ltd (Co Number 08016114)
55 Jasmine Grove, Anerley, London SE20 8JY
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. The fostering agency aims to provide placements for individual and sibling group placements on emergency, short and long-term placements and parent and child 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, acknowledging the individuality of the child taking their cultural needs into account'.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had seven approved fostering households with five children in placement.

Inspection dates: 28 October to 1 November 2019

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 September 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Foster carers are committed to meeting the individual needs of children. As a result, children are making steady progress and have good experiences in their foster families in all areas of their development.

Most of the children are engaged in educational activities. However, learning outcomes are variable. For example, one child has 100% mainstream attendance, while another child, who had previously refused to attend education, has recently consented to working on a 1-to-1 basis with a home tutor.

Foster carers advocate for their children and their communication with education professionals is good. This helps to encourage children to invest in their learning and achieve positive educational and vocational outcomes.

Children live healthy lifestyles. Foster carers and staff ensure that children have their physical, emotional and social needs met. Children have good access to primary healthcare services and benefit from attending routine health appointments.

Children said that they feel listened to by the agency. They also noted that they are aware of how to make complaints and all children spoken with could name a trusted adult that they could speak to on any matters of concern. Despite this, the agency is not robust in challenging placing authorities when reviews of care plans are not carried out within timescales or mandatory social work visits do not take place. Consequently, opportunities are missed for issues and concerns to be deliberated by all professionals leading to drift for some children.

Whenever possible, children move into their foster families in a planned way. Introductions between children and their prospective foster carers are sensitively arranged. For example, foster carers provide children with welcome booklets to support the child when they move in. When this is not achievable, the agency provides foster carers' profiles to placing social workers for them to share with children. This helps children to settle quickly and placements are generally stable.

Children feel part of their foster families. They are involved in the usual family activities and events. A child said, 'I am happy with this family, they talk to me and help me to understand this new country and the different ways of living.' Another child who previously had multi placements said, 'This is the first home I feel part of, I hope to remain until I move to independence.'

Children lead active lives. They have fun, try new things and develop their interests, talents and social skills. For example, one child attended a football match for the first time, while another child was helped to develop an interest in fishing.

Foster carers are sensitive to the reasons why children may struggle with their emotions. They provide children with good levels of nurturing care and look for ways to show them their love and commitment to them.

Foster carers provide and maintain consistent boundaries. As a result, children develop an increasing awareness of and ability to manage their difficult feelings and

emotions. A social worker commented, 'With perseverance and consistency [the child's] behaviour has improved immensely and she feels very much a part of the family and readily engages in family activities.'

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

This fostering service has skilled, caring and resilient foster carers. They come from a range of backgrounds, experiences and walks of life. Foster carers and staff have a good understanding and awareness of risk. This is underpinned by them receiving regular supervision and relevant training.

Staff and foster carers manage safeguarding incidents well. Episodes of children going missing from care and their involvement in sexual or criminal exploitation are significantly reduced once placed with the agency and, for some children, these behaviours have ceased. When these instances do occur, staff and foster carers devise effective strategies that help to manage children's risk-taking behaviours.

Systems to promote the safety and well-being of children have been strengthened. Risks are identified and well understood by all concerned and children's 'safe plans' are updated after any incident. These ensure that foster carers and the staff team are knowledgeable about the risks posed to children and how these can be reduced.

The agency acts swiftly and takes appropriate action following any safeguarding concerns. The registered manager conducts learning reviews following any incident of allegations against foster carers. This is disseminated and used to develop social work practice and improve the quality of care for children.

Local authority safeguarding officers and independent reviewing officers confirmed that the agency has good safeguarding procedures in place and acts in a prompt and transparent way. Foster carers spoken to demonstrated a good level of understanding of the often-complex needs of children living with them. Foster carers respond well to situations in a skilled and sensitive way.

A comprehensive training programme provides foster carers with access to courses that inform their safer care of children. Foster carers value this approach and are able to keep their knowledge up to date. Training topics include safeguarding, radicalisation, gangs and de-escalation techniques.

Foster carers' homes are safe and secure. Staff routinely conduct checks that ensure that homes are well maintained and comfortable and that there are no health and safety concerns. Where safety issues arise, staff and managers take effective action to resolve them.

The agency has robust systems in place to ensure that the recruitment and vetting process for foster carers, panel members and staff promotes the safety and well-being of children. In addition, the agency's clear and comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures assist to keep children safe from harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and staff are appropriately qualified to deliver a good level of service to foster carers and children. The registered manager is highly visible and

takes a hand-on approach to her practice. She has an ambitious but realistic vision for the agency. There is good governance.

Recent initiatives, such as putting a hold on the recruitment of new foster carers in order to consolidate, develop and improve practice throughout the agency, demonstrate a determination by leaders to improve the lives of children. Furthermore, leaders and managers continue to take measures to drive the service forward which has resulted in the implementation of good fostering practices.

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has strengthened her monitoring processes. These ensure that, when there are any concerns regarding children, any patterns and trends linked to risk are quickly identified. She has good oversight of the progress that children are making. The agency has a development plan that includes the importance of staff training, consultation with children and the recruitment of new foster carers.

Foster carers, staff and children described in detail the progress that children have made from their starting points. However, the supporting evidence is weak. This does not provide children with the information that they would need to gain an understanding of their journey in care.

All staff and foster carers spoken with noted that the agency provides a very supportive environment in which they feel listened to and valued. Supervision of foster carers is regular and encourages them to be more reflective in their practice.

The support of supervising social workers is good. However, gaps are noted in the frequency of staff supervision and appraisals.

The agency prepares foster carers effectively. This ensures that prospective foster carers gain a clear understanding of the needs of children and how to care for them.

There is an established fostering panel led by an experienced and knowledgeable panel chair. The central list includes members from a range of disciplines. Some aspects of the work of the panel are particularly strong, for example the scrutiny of annual reviews and standards of care reviews.

The statement of purpose is a comprehensive document that accurately outlines the aims and objectives of the fostering service. The children's guide provides useful information about what children can expect from the agency and how to complain.

All requirements and recommendations made as a result of 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, 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— (a) receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21(4)(a))	13/12/2019

Recommendations

- Information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now and in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 26.6)
- The fostering service contacts the responsible authority to request statutory reviews or visits if these are overdue for any child, or if a review has not already been arranged by the responsible authority and a change in the care plan is needed, there has been a significant change in arrangements for the child's care or a major action (e.g. a change of placement) which is not in the care plan appears likely. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 31.6) In particular, the manager must ensure that regular reviews are held in a timely manner to avoid drift in planning for children.
- Children are assisted to secure an independent advocate to support them in providing their view, wishes and feelings in statutory reviews. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 31.8)

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

Registered provider: Hatols Fostering Services Ltd (Co Number 08016114)

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Inspector

Juanita Mayers, social care inspector



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