

Action For Children Fostering Manchester Tfco

Action For Children

Peel Green House, 696 Liverpool Road, Manchester M30 7LP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The fostering agency is run by a children's charity.

The agency provides mainstream and therapeutic placements to children and young people. This represents a change from the agency's statement of purpose, as delivery of care has transitioned from the Treatment Foster Care Oregon, (TFCO) model.

The fostering agency provides short-break services to children and young people.

At the time of the inspection, there were 11 approved fostering households with three children in placements.

The manager has been in post since June 2017 and was registered with Ofsted on 1 May 2018.

Inspection dates: 10 to 14 September 2018

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: 17 July 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children have good experiences with their foster families. Foster carers provide good-quality care and support to children who, in turn, make progress while in their care.
- Children build positive relationships with their foster carers. Their carers understand the children's needs and they provide individualised care to meet those needs.
- Children progress well in education, supported by committed and ambitious foster carers, who communicate well with education providers.
- Children have their health needs met. Carers and agency staff work well with involved agencies to ensure that services are provided to meet the children's physical and emotional health needs.
- Children and carers receive practical and emotional support from the agency. They enjoy regular social occasions to share experiences. The children and carers' achievements are celebrated alongside staff and managers.
- Children are listened to and they are involved in decisions about their lives in a way that is meaningful to them.
- Children are kept safe because they have positive relationships with their carers, who create an environment of respect and trust. Children are supported to become independent.
- The panel is very well organised and internal monitoring provides good professional scrutiny on all the decisions made.
- Foster carers receive regular supervision, and mandatory and bespoke training. This helps them to support the needs of the children in their care and to develop their skills and knowledge.
- The agency works effectively with placing authorities and partner agencies. It challenges its own practice and that of other professionals. The focus on improving outcomes for children is strong.
- The agency's management is visible and effective at strategic and operational levels. Monitoring of practice is thorough and the agency has clear development plans that are based on a sound knowledge of its strengths and areas for development.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- The statement of purpose and the children's guide need updating to accurately reflect the service model of the agency.
- The agency needs to ensure that there is no delay in the submission to Ofsted of notifiable events.
- Going forward, the agency needs to recruit sufficient foster carers to be

responsive to current and predicted future demands on the agency. It should also ensure that each child is carefully matched to a foster placement.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
4: Review of the statement of purpose and children's guide The fostering service provider must keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children's guide, and notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 4 (a)(b))	31/10/2018
36: Notifiable events 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. (Regulation 36 (1))	31/10/2018

Recommendations

■ 11: Preparation for a placement

Ensure that each child is carefully matched to a foster placement. (NMS 11.2)

■ 13: Recruiting and assessing foster carers

Aim to recruit sufficient foster carers to be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. (NMS 13.1)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Registration of the agency took place in August 2016. From that time, the agency has applied the behavioural model of Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) to the care of children. Since the last inspection, the agency has reflected on the TFCO model and has concluded that the model is not the best fit for children who have experienced trauma and abuse.

The agency has now adopted a therapeutic and mainstream model and is progressing as part of a transition plan. Children's placements under the TFCO model have not been made since March 2018. Because of this, the numbers of approved foster carers and children placed are low.

Since the last inspection, the children placed have enjoyed good experiences with their foster families. Foster carers provide good-quality care and support to children. The children make progress while in their care.

There are trusting and loving relationships between the carers and the children. This results in the children having confidence to try new things, adapting from previous negative experience and placement moves. The children flourish in this environment because they experience family life, and they like the new and challenging experiences. This includes enjoying holidays along with their chosen interests and hobbies.

A social worker told the inspectors, 'The agency is brilliant, the carers worked fantastically well with my child; they are really supportive. The agency provides me with great communication; it's excellent, they keep me updated about everything. The carers have been good at working with the child's family and this has had a positive impact and improved the child's behaviour.'

Speaking about the carers and the agency, a child told the inspectors, 'I definitely give them 10/10, definitely, it's outstanding. If I don't like it, I will tell you. I don't have a bad thing to say about the agency.'

The agency supports foster carers in encouraging and supporting children's education. All the children fostered by the agency are in full-time education and foster carers work hard to help them succeed in this environment. Foster carers show a commitment to helping children achieve, and the agency monitors attendance and achievement at school closely. This ensures that the children are provided with the correct support to help them learn.

Children benefit from foster carers' support to improve their health. The carers encourage attendance at routine healthcare appointments, and advocate on behalf of the children to good effect. Where specialist interventions are required, the children are supported by professional agencies who support the children's emotional and psychological well-being. A professional told the inspectors, 'The

agency has been proactive in getting the child's voice heard and getting a service that the child required.'

Children and carers feel supported and involved in the development of the agency. Managers and staff value the children and carers' contributions and consider their views. Completed feedback surveys from carers show positive testimonies for the agency's support. Children and carers' views form part of the agency's shared vision. Carers consistently told the inspectors that they feel listened to and supported. One carer and their child told the inspectors, 'We are all like a big happy family.'

The agency's success in moving children on has been variable. Since the last inspection, nine children have been placed with foster carers. Most children placed did make progress in their placements, with some remaining with their carers.

However, four children did not remain with their carers and returned to residential care. This is because some carers did not have the skills to manage the children's behaviour. This resulted in placement disruption. Furthermore, under the previous TFCO model, follow-on placements were not available for some of the children who had completed the treatment programme.

Going forward, the agency needs to recruit sufficient carers to be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the agency. It should also ensure that each child is carefully matched to a foster placement.

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

Since the last inspection, safeguarding arrangements have improved. A safeguarding policy, including the management of allegations, is now in place. The staff demonstrate their knowledge well of their safeguarding responsibilities. They share any observations, worries and concerns appropriately with their manager, placing authority social workers and the designated officer where necessary.

When concerns over safeguarding, standards of care and significant incidents occur, they are responded to in an appropriate way. However, the agency has not informed Ofsted when incidents take place. This prevents the regulator from having an overview of the concern and how effectively the agency manages significant incidents.

Children's safety is assured by the agency's thorough practice across all areas of its work. The agency has effective arrangements in place for considering the children's vulnerabilities. This ensures that they are suitable to keep children safe. Careful considerations take place to identify any risks faced by the children and plans are put in place to reduce these. The agency works in partnership with the children's local authority social workers and carers to agree the children's risk assessments. Regular monitoring ensures that these assessments are updated as required.

Trained foster carers understand the agency's child protection and safeguarding policies and they follow the procedures. They are aware of the children's vulnerabilities. Known and emerging risk factors are regularly assessed and

discussed by foster carers and the agency. Overall, the children's risks are reduced inside and outside of their foster home. This includes risks of child sexual exploitation and missing from home incidents becoming less frequent.

The agency's supervising social worker, family worker or skills coach makes at least one unannounced visit to the carers' home each year, often more frequently. This provides an opportunity to consider the home's conditions and to speak with placed children. These visits are tracked and monitored by the registered manager, to make sure that no one is overlooked. These arrangements strengthen the agency's health and safety and safeguarding procedures by ensuring that the foster home and the carers are complying with legal requirements.

From their planned arrival at the foster home, the children show a marked improvement in their behaviour, education, emotional well-being and stability. In many cases, the agency's skilled workers provide continued support after the children have left the foster home. This commitment has a positive impact on children's future life opportunities.

The agency implements sound recruitment practice, ensuring that only those assessed as suitable to work with children are employed. Staff profiles are available for the children and they describe individual people who manage and work in the agency. This provides the children with information about the staff personalities who will be responsible for overseeing their care in the foster home.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This is a well-managed agency that is characterised by visible and effective leadership and management at strategic and operational levels. The agency's senior leaders, registered manager and staff focus on providing good outcomes for children. In doing so, the agency constantly examines its own practice through monitoring and quality assurance processes.

The registered manager and the staff team have the relevant experience and skills to provide a good service to the children. Team members are committed to the agency and are well trained and supported to carry out their roles.

All staff within the agency demonstrate an excellent understanding of each of the children's needs. The panel chair spoke highly of their commitment, saying, 'The diversity of the staff team and panel members makes them extremely good at identifying the needs of the children to be placed with foster carers. The agency's commitment to enabling the panel to develop is impressive.' Because of this approach, assessments and decisions made are thorough. A carer told the inspectors, 'I had a very thorough assessment, much more thorough than I went through to adopt my son.'

The agency panel adviser and the agency decision-maker are consistently on hand to provide advice and guidance to panel members should this be needed. It is evident from the central list and panel members' profiles that they have a range of social and cultural diversity, skills and knowledge. The panel is seeking

representation from a care leaver. This is because the last care leaver to attend panel has moved on to university. The panel minutes show that its members' discussions are balanced and focused on the applicants' strengths and potential limitations.

The senior leaders and registered manager understand the strengths and weaknesses of the agency and they track compliance, identifying areas for sustainable growth and succession. Data analysis provides a timeline for improvement that is achievable. Where some areas are underdeveloped, there is a plan for how to address these issues.

For example, the statement of purpose is being reviewed. This is because it describes the aims of the agency as being to provide a TFCO model of care. This is not a true reflection as the agency no longer uses this model of care. Children learn about their rights and entitlements in a children's information pack. This information is currently being revised with help from children and a digital resource specialist. The agency has identified new premises that are more cost-effective.

Despite the small number of foster carers and children this agency provides for, the agency remains financially viable as it accesses additional resources from the organisation's wider assets. Senior leaders have agreed a plan to reduce and rebuild the agency using a different model of care.

A fully inclusive approach to implementing the new therapeutic and mainstream model of care is under way. A psychologist is rolling out training for the staff and carers. Team meetings, staff supervision and appraisals are conducted, and these sessions inform the staff of future developments and how the agency will meet its aims.

The registered manager works well with partner agencies. She confidently challenges services and professionally supports her staff to advocate for the children placed.

Four requirements and eight recommendations made at the last inspection have now been met.

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: 1226858

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Inspectors

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