

Therapeutic Fostering Limited

Therapeutic Fostering Limited

Astra Office Suites, Astra Business Centre (E), Roman Way, Preston, Lancashire
PR2 5AP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned fostering agency offers short-term, long-term, emergency and respite foster care. The agency is responsible for the assessment, approval, training, supervision, and support of foster carers.

The registered manager has been in post since the agency was registered by Ofsted in July 2016.

At the time of this inspection, the agency was supporting 13 approved fostering households that are providing care to 18 children.

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 August 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 12 July 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children are at the heart of this agency. They are supported to thrive in stable, supportive, loving foster families and benefit from highly nurturing, individualised care. Managers, staff and foster carers know children well and are committed to ensuring that they are provided with opportunities to achieve excellent outcomes. Consequently, the vast majority of children make exceptional progress when living with the agency's foster carers.

The agency has a strong family feel that is valued by staff, foster carers and children and this enables them to feel connected to the agency. Children and foster carers are exceptionally positive about the support that they receive. One child said, 'They help me a lot. They are my family.'

Foster carers feel privileged to foster for this agency. One foster carer said, 'Everyone knows us and our children; we never have to repeat our story and that makes such a difference.' Another said, 'I greatly admire and respect the agency for the exceptional support they have provided me and the children in my care.'

The agency is a diverse organisation, children are helped to understand their identity and sense of self through direct work and contact with other foster families. A network of highly supportive relationships has naturally evolved between the agency's foster families. This is facilitated by the agency and enables foster carers to support each other effectively.

Children have opportunities to enjoy activities and holidays with their foster carers. They also attend regular events with other foster families and agency staff. This helps them to develop positive peer relationships and support networks and enables them to develop a strong sense of belonging.

Children are listened to and are consulted on a regular basis. Their views are creatively sought and are used to contribute to the care they receive and wider agency development. Everyone involved with the agency has access to a wide range of relevant training and development opportunities to further enhance their skills, knowledge and awareness of relevant issues.

The agency strives to ensure that children are placed with foster carers who can best meet their individual needs. Matching processes and transition plans are robust, well-planned and centred around children's needs. Documents clearly reflect how foster carer's skills are considered alongside children's needs.

When appropriate, children have been supported to stay with their foster carers post-18 and many children remain in touch with their foster carers and agency staff once they have left. This enables children and young people to continue to benefit from these relationships and support networks into adulthood.

Children's relationships with people who are important to them are well supported in line with their plans, and family time is well promoted. Foster carers are proactive in creating opportunities for children to have positive experiences with their families. The agency goes above and beyond to enable children to live with their brothers and sisters when possible.

Children's education is extremely well supported. Agency staff and foster carers are proactive in advocating for children to ensure that their educational needs are being met. Children are supported with homework and extra-curricular learning. Older children are helped to access further education and employment. Children's achievements are celebrated.

Children's health needs are exceptionally well understood. Foster carers work as part of a multi-agency team and when needed attend specialist training to further develop their understanding of children's health conditions. Agency staff are proactive in addressing concerns with other professionals in order to ensure that children are consistently treated with dignity and respect.

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

An exceptionally strong safeguarding culture underpins practice across the agency. Foster carers and agency staff know how to keep children safe. They implement clear routines and boundaries and children say they feel safe. One professional said, 'They are one of the best agencies we work with. Our social workers want their children to live with carers from this agency as they know that they will receive high quality, stable, safe care.'

Risk management processes are highly effective. Children's risks and vulnerabilities are well understood. Children are involved in age-appropriate discussions about risk to raise their understanding and help them to make safer choices. Children are regularly seen by agency staff. Agency staff see children regularly and know them well. This ensures that children have trusted adults who they can talk to outside of their foster families.

Foster carers are helped to understand children's needs and to develop strategies for supporting children to regulate their emotions. The implementation of a research-based therapeutic model of care is supporting carers to develop a real understanding of children's lived experiences and the impact of trauma on their behaviours.

When children experience complex, high-risk behaviours, their foster carers know how to respond and feel well supported by agency staff. The manager has strong oversight of investigations into concerns, incidents and allegations. Swift action is taken to minimise any impact on children. All investigations are dealt with robustly in line with statutory guidance and shared with appropriate agencies. The manager uses any learning from incidents to continually develop agency practice.

As a result of the foster carers approaches to working with children, high risk incidents, including missing-from-home and self-injurious behaviours have significantly reduced for most children.

Innovative approaches to keeping foster carers informed means that they regularly receive updates and clear guidance around topical issues, including caring for children who vape and speaking with children about events in the news and on social media.

Appropriate checks and references are undertaken during assessments of prospective foster carers. Assessment reports are comprehensive and analytical, enabling clear, objective approval decisions to be made within required timescales.

Foster carer reviews and supervisions are robust and ensure that carers receive support alongside scrutiny of their practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

This fostering agency benefits from the clear direction and drive of the registered manager and responsible individual. They have high expectations of carers, staff and each other, and regularly go 'above and beyond' to provide exceptional support to children, foster families and staff.

The registered manager and responsible individual are held in exceptionally high regard by children, foster carers, staff and other professionals. They are committed to providing children with opportunities to achieve excellent outcomes and have developed a culture across the agency that is child centred, inspirational and aspirational.

Inclusivity is a key strength in the agency. Leaders and managers are highly visible and ensure that everyone connected with the agency has a voice. They model excellent communication with partner agencies and advocate strongly on behalf of children to ensure that their needs are consistently being met.

The transition to a new electronic recording system was well planned and is kept under review. Leaders and managers hold the system provider to high account to ensure that the system is evolving to meet the agency's needs. Records clearly demonstrated the journey for children and foster carers. Minor recording shortfalls identified during the inspection were swiftly addressed and did not have any impact on children.

The registered manager has excellent oversight of the service and fostering business. Clear monitoring systems enable him to recognise the agency's strengths, areas for continuous development and to identify any patterns and trends.

Arrangements are in place for the supervision of all staff, including the manager. Supervision sessions provide opportunities for reflection and development.

The agency's fostering panel is diverse and inclusive. A new panel chair has recently been appointed and the panel is continuing to develop. Members of the central list have a wide range of experiences relevant to fostering. They benefit from their annual appraisal and have access to relevant training opportunities. Panel minutes reflect clear rationale for recommendations. However, they do not consistently reflect the scrutiny and challenge provided by panel during discussions. On one occasion, panel acknowledged that that they were not quorate but then started to discuss administrative panel business.

The agency decision-maker is effective at providing appropriate challenge and scrutiny to ensure that decision-making is robust. Clear decision-making processes are in place, but on one occasion a decision to change a foster carer's approval was only agreed by them verbally and they did not receive a written determination about the change. This did not have any impact on children.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.7)
- The registered person should ensure that the agency's fostering panel is quorate prior to any panel business being conducted. ('The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 4', Section 5.19)
- The registered person must ensure that where the fostering service considers that a foster carer's terms of approval should be changed and the foster carer has not submitted their agreement with this change in writing, the foster carer must be given a written determination - a notice that the decision maker proposes to amend their terms of approval, together with the reasons for this. ('The Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations Volume 4', Section 5.42)

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: 1236901

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Responsible individual: William Grace

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Inspectors

Caroline Bertram, Regulatory Inspection Manager
Michelle Greenhalgh, Social Care Inspector

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