

The Ethical Fostering Service Limited

The Ethical Fostering Service Limited
Maxet House, Lansdown Industrial Estate, Gloucester Road, Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire GL51 8NG
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a private limited company. This fostering agency provides a range of placements for children including short- and long-term care, parent and child, unaccompanied children and young adults 'staying put'. The agency currently has 20 carers in 11 fostering households, caring for 11 children.

The fostering agency registered with Ofsted in 2018. It has an office in Cheltenham.

Inspection dates: 18 to 22 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: N/A

Overall judgement at last inspection: N/A

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

This is the first inspection of this newly registered agency. Children make good progress in all areas of their development because of the consistent and personalised approach of foster carers. Matching assessments are thorough and ensure that children live with foster carers who are best able to meet their needs. Managers ensure that 'progress records' are completed to track and review children's progress from their starting points.

Supervising social workers and foster carers provide blankets, welcome boxes and a user-friendly guide to help children feel wanted and important. Children also receive a 'Meet the family' guide book about their carers, their home and pets. This helps provide reassurance. Further help is needed to ensure that children whose first language is not English can access interpreters and translators ensuring that they receive the same information as other children.

Supervising social workers generally ensure that as much information as possible is provided before children arrive with their foster carers. This informs future care planning and provides the opportunity to set objectives and expectations. However, some children are missing statutory documents, particularly care plans. Subsequently, this could affect the quality of care provided to children if necessary information is not provided and agreed when children move in with their foster carers.

Children make significant progress with their education, and achievements are celebrated. Foster carers provide help with homework and offer encouragement and stable routines. Consequently, children achieve very good GCSE results and have high aspirations.

Supervising social workers and foster carers understand the individual health needs of children and provide good help and support. For example, older children are helped with worries such as accessing sexual health advice, assistance and contraception. Supervising social workers talk with children about issues such as mental health. Foster carers are supported to access appropriate health assessments and referrals to specialist services for children when needed.

Managers and supervising social workers ensure that thorough assessment and checks take place for all foster carers who transfer and join the agency. Careful and considered planning guarantees that only the most suitable foster carers are able to care for children. Panel members come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have a wide range of skills and knowledge. There is effective safeguarding oversight, and panel minutes highlight the robust challenge and scrutiny of the panel chair.

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

Foster carers help children to keep safe. During this inspection, children did not raise any concerns about feeling unsafe with their foster carers. Children told the inspector, 'I am happy and have no worries', and 'There is nothing I do not like or that worries me ... It is like any other family.'

Since registration, there have been no complaints from foster carers, children or professionals about the quality of care provided. There has been no use of physical restraint. Foster carers are trained in de-escalation and non-physical restraint. The manager does not believe in using physical restraint, as this can cause further harm to children and foster carers.

Supervising social workers create comprehensive safer-care plans. These consider a range of potential risks and identify clear expectations about how foster carers are to safely meet the needs of children in a nurturing but sensible way.

There has been one allegation made by a placing authority of emotional harm by foster carers. This related to some of their parenting approaches. The allegation was unsubstantiated. Managers have taken effective action to review the situation, and additional training and support have been provided to the foster carers. The agency employs advocacy services. However, this support was not offered to children at the time. This input could have enabled children to share any concerns or issues they had independently of the foster carers and placing authority.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Managers and staff are qualified and exceptionally experienced. They are highly dedicated and passionate about delivering the highest quality of service to children and foster carers. Leaders and managers have considerable ambition for the service and have a clear business plan to develop and grow.

Leaders and managers have robust monitoring and review processes in place. Reports about the quality of the service highlight areas of progress as well as where improvement is needed. The reports show strong analysis of incidents and areas of learning and reflection. Leaders are transparent about areas for improvement, which enables a culture of learning.

Foster carers feel supported by caring and reliable staff. One foster carer commented, 'If they say it, they do it. The support has been brilliant from the top all the way down.' Another said, 'I feel confident and so supported.'

Managers and staff consult with children on a regular basis through unannounced visits, meetings and consultation forms. Leaders are keen for children's wishes and feelings to shape the agency and have plans to further involve them in the shaping of the service.

All foster carers have completed their 'Training support and development standards' workbooks and are up to date with mandatory training. Foster carers receive a range

of online training to enable easy access and flexibility due to geographical locations. Training is provided on safeguarding, the exploitation of children, county lines, knife crime, and safer caring, and bespoke training is also provided when highlighted or requested. However, carers do not benefit from a mixture of training methods that includes face-to-face training. This could enhance learning opportunities and bring benefits such as the support of other foster carers.

Staff receive regular supervision with in-depth 'case summaries' that reflect on the needs and progress of children and foster carers. Staff expressed feeling valued by their managers during this inspection.

Panel members and staff receive good-quality induction and training to ensure that they are prepared and skilled for their roles. Recruitment records are generally robust with all carers and staff being part of the update service. Verification of identity, qualifications and references is in place. However, some gaps were identified in the employment history of staff and foster carers, and there was no record of these being appropriately checked or verified.

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, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17(3))	14/02/2020
Ensure the fostering service provider does not employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20(1)(a)(3)) In particular, the agency must ensure that it obtains a full employment history for all staff and verify any gaps in employment.	14/02/2020

Recommendations

- Children have access to independent advice and support from adults who they can contact directly and in private about problems or concerns, which is appropriate to their age and understanding. Children know their rights to advocacy, how to access an advocate and how to contact the Children's Rights Director. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 8, paragraph 1.5)
- Support and training are made available to foster carers, including hard to reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of the children they are caring for or are expected to care for. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 41, paragraph 20.8)
- The service has the facilities to work with children with physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties or for whom English is not their

first language. Oral and written communications are made available in a format which is appropriate to the physical, sensory and learning impairments, communication difficulties and language of the individual. The procedures include arrangements for reading, translating, Makaton, pictures, tape recording and explaining documents to those people who are unable to understand the document. (National Minimum Standards, page 51, paragraph 25.12)

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: 1274892

Registered provider: The Ethical Fostering Service Limited

Registered provider address: First Floor Offices, County House, Dunswell Road,
Cottingham, East Yorkshire HU16 4JT

Responsible individual: Marilyn Josefsen

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Inspector

Anna Gravelle, social care inspector



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