

# Young People At Heart

Young People At Heart Limited

Gresley House, Ten Pound Walk, Doncaster, Yorkshire DN4 5HX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

The registered office is in Doncaster, Yorkshire. This not-for-profit independent fostering agency has other registered offices in Essex and Herefordshire. The agency offers short-term, long-term/permanent, sibling groups, respite and emergency placements. At the time of the inspection, there were eight families approved to care for children. The agency was registered in February 2019, and this is its first inspection. The manager was registered with Ofsted at the same time, but at the time of the inspection she was no longer in post.

### Inspection dates: 10 to 12 February 2020

|                                                                                           |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b> | <b>good</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                             |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | good |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|

|                                           |                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | requires improvement to be good |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** This is the first inspection.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** not applicable

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

The agency staff know the foster carers well. The placements officer considers the needs of each child referred and their compatibility with fostering households. Foster carers appreciate being involved in this process and those spoken to were positive about the quality of the matching. Matching and placement planning documents make sure the agency has as much information as possible about the children. However, some of the foster carers are not provided with the child's care plan in a timely way.

Foster carers provide a warm and welcoming environment and, where possible, children receive a family book providing information about their new carers in advance of any move. The agency provides children with a welcome pack containing information about the agency and children's rights when they move in. This includes a memory box with age-appropriate gifts and a handmade, personalised quilt to welcome the children to their new homes.

Children are making good progress from their starting points in different areas of their lives. Children live in stable homes provided by committed foster carers. The agency promotes a therapeutic parenting approach, and the consistent and nurturing care provided by the foster carers helps the children to re-establish trust in adults. The children experience stability in their lives and no children have had to move in an unplanned way.

The children make good progress in their education and have improved attendance at school. The proactive foster carers and agency staff appropriately challenge the placing authorities to make sure the children receive the correct level of support in schools that can meet their needs. The agency is good at celebrating children's achievements. This includes children being mentioned in the agency's newsletter or receiving a card or certificate.

The foster carers are strong advocates for the children. They make sure that the children's health needs are met and that they receive services from speech and language therapists, consultants or an occupational therapist. This supports children to live healthy lives and results in improvements in their health and development. Children of all ages make progress, which leads to their improved confidence and raised self-esteem.

The foster carers include the children in their family lives and the children take part in many enjoyable experiences, such as learning to swim or going to the beach. The agency staff arrange fun days out for all the children and their foster carers, such as going to the theatre to see a pantomime. This has helped them to build positive and supportive relationships across the agency and fostering households. Some foster carers have set up their own informal support groups and meet up with each other and with the children. The children are the focus and at the heart of the work of the

agency. The overriding message that agency staff and foster carers give is that working for the agency is like 'being part of a big family'.

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

The agency staff are good at working with foster carers, school personnel and placing authorities to develop strategies to manage the children's risks and vulnerabilities. For example, this may include strategies to keep children as safe as possible from family members who live nearby. Children's risks and behaviours are identified and are outlined in the individualised risk assessments. These inform the foster carers' safe caring plans. The agency regularly reviews the risk assessments, and the multi-agency approach makes sure that children are protected.

The agency's support and training of foster carers is good. The foster carers receive training in topics such as safeguarding, paediatric first aid and positive behaviour support. As children begin to form trusting relationships with their carers, this leads to them opening up and sharing information about their past. The foster carers make detailed recordings and the agency responds promptly to any potential child protection concerns. This information helps the placing authority with its investigations. Agency staff are considerate of the needs of the foster carers' birth children. They provide extra support to those children who are affected by the disclosures, such as by undertaking direct work sessions.

Foster carers receive therapeutic parenting training and behaviour is managed positively and consistently. The children benefit from the clear boundaries and routines, which lead to better sleep patterns and less frequent outbursts. Foster carers are resilient and remain calm under pressure and when challenged. There have been no physical interventions to manage negative behaviour. A professional spoke positively about the life-story work completed by one carer which included a personalised child-friendly pictorial book to help a child understand their experiences and trauma.

Foster carers have regular reflective discussions with their supervising social worker. The foster carers are also supported through additional visits from the agency's social work assistant, who works with the children to help strengthen relationships with the agency. Foster carers spoke highly of this support and advice they receive.

Since registration, there have been no occasions when children have gone missing. There are no children known to be at risk of child sexual or criminal exploitation.

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

The registered manager has recently left the agency. This leaves no registered manager in post to provide day-to-day management oversight of the agency. However, the responsible individual has put interim management and staffing arrangements in place until a permanent manager is recruited.

The foster carers benefit from professional and supportive relationships with the agency. The directors are actively involved and often visit the foster carers to support them throughout their journey with the agency. The directors also attend the training and social events to keep their skills and knowledge updated and to remain visible and approachable to their foster carers. To show their appreciation of the foster carers' hard work, the directors give hampers as gifts at Christmas. The foster carers welcome this high level of involvement from the senior leaders of the agency, which has mitigated the lack of oversight from a registered manager. One foster carer said, 'I feel supported by all and will call [name of the responsible individual] at any time. It is amazing being able to go to the top boss, who is very personable.'

Staff and foster carers feel valued and supported and have access to a range of training resources. They receive regular supervision that helps them to reflect on their practice and caring for the children.

The foster carers feel confident to make complaints or raise concerns directly with the leaders. Robust action is taken, and thorough investigations are completed. This makes sure the leaders learn from any shortfalls found and have opportunities to put new safeguards in place, such as improved oversight of the computerised records.

An experienced professional chair leads the fostering panel. The panel is thorough in its consideration of the information presented and provides effective, child-focused quality assurance of the work carried out by the agency. However, some of the statutory checks are requested late in the assessment process by agency staff and are only available on the day of the panel. This does not give the panel members the information in a timely way.

The administration of the panel is efficient, and the minutes are comprehensive. This helps the agency decision maker, who is thorough in his consideration of all presented cases, to make well-informed decisions regarding the approval of carers.

The service provided is child-focused and leaders, staff and foster carers are passionate about improving the outcomes for the children. However, although two quality of care reports have been produced, these have not been shared with the regulator. Furthermore, no recent report has been produced. The reports seen do not provide an evaluation of the service and lack feedback, making it difficult for leaders to identify areas for improvement.

# 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   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <p>The registered person must maintain a system for—<br/>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3))</p> <p>Specifically, develop an effective system for monitoring and reviewing the activities of the service. This should include consultation with stakeholders. The evaluation of the quality of care review should be sent to the regulator at regular intervals.</p> | 30/04/2020 |

## Recommendations

- All necessary information is provided to panel members at least five working days in advance of the panel meeting to enable full and proper consideration. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.3)
- The foster carer is given a copy of the child's placement plan as soon as this is provided to them by the responsible authority. If provision of the care plan by the responsible authority is delayed, the fostering service follows this up with the responsible authority. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 31.2)  
In particular, develop an effective escalation policy referring to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 when contacting the placing authority and if necessary challenge the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and escalate the matter to the Director of Children's Services.

## **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:** 2500324

**Registered provider:** Young People At Heart Limited

**Registered provider address:** 36 Rosslyn Park, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 9QZ

**Responsible individual:** Gary Cox

**Registered manager:** Susan Williams

**Telephone number:** 07817 174 849

**Email address:** gary@youngpeopleatheart.org

## **Inspectors**

Tina Ruffles, Social Care Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

© Crown copyright 2020