

Diverse Fostering Limited

Diverse House, 481 High Street, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 5EP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

A small private company operates this fostering agency. The agency was registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

The registered manager registered with Ofsted in June 2020 and is appropriately qualified and experienced.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

This is the fostering agency's first inspection since it registered.

Inspection dates: 22 to 26 November 2021

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: not applicable

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

Foster carers are supported and well prepared to meet the needs of the children they have placed with them. Leaders ensure that matching processes are thorough and well planned. Also, they ensure that foster carers have all the relevant information regarding children. Foster carers described how they felt involved in the matching process and that their questions were always followed up and acted on. This has resulted in good stability for most of the children living with the agency's foster carers in the agency.

Children thrive and make good progress from their starting points. This is because they share positive and trusting relationships with their foster carers. Inspectors observed children showing affection to their foster carers. One child stated that she loves living with her foster carer and is very happy. She would not like to live anywhere else and would like to stay until she is 18. These positive relationships help children to feel safe and secure.

Foster carers have high aspirations for children and support them with their education. They ensure that children have access to education settings that are suited to their needs. For example, one foster carer has researched and found an appropriate secondary school for one child. Furthermore, the foster carer has worked with the school to support the transition for the child. The child has been appointed to sit on the school council, which has improved her confidence and self-esteem.

Children's health needs are well met and supported by foster carers and the agency. The agency is proactive in ensuring that children receive specialist help and support. For example, one child suffers from a complex and significant health condition which has led to them being admitted to hospital on several occasions. The agency has matched this child with foster carers that are qualified nurses. Also, when faced with times of crisis, the agency has provided additional support to the family to ensure that other children living in the home continue to receive day-to-day care. This support means that children receive specialist and individual healthcare relevant to their needs.

Foster carers advocate and successfully represent children's views and wishes. This advocacy helps children to receive support that enriches their lives. For example, one foster carer has made daily calls to the dentist to follow up on the progress of referrals made at previous appointments. Furthermore, another carer has followed through actions from education meetings and secured a laptop to assist the child with their education. This helps to achieve individualised care and secure positive outcomes for children.

New foster carers joining the agency feel welcomed into the 'agency family'. Assessments are thorough and consider whether carers are suitable to foster. Foster carers stated that their needs were sensitively considered and reviewed by the

assessor and the fostering panel. This supportive approach means that foster carers are well equipped and motivated to deliver good care to children.

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

Children are supported to feel safe in their foster homes. Foster carers and agency staff identify, understand and manage risk well. Safer-care plans and risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. Also, the agency's response to significant incidents involving children is efficient and effective. This helps to ensure that children are kept safe.

Children rarely go missing from their foster homes and the number of incidents is low. On occasions when children have gone missing, the foster carers have responded appropriately and acted in line with the child's plans. Also, foster carers ensure that they notify and work with partner agencies. As a result, return home interviews have taken place within the relevant timescales. These actions help to promote and maintain children's welfare.

Foster carers are adequately prepared by the agency to manage children's behaviour. This means that incidents requiring physical restraint and the use of sanctions with children are minimal. Furthermore, the management team has taken immediate action when its members feel that foster carers have not responded to children's behaviour in an appropriate manner. This oversight means that foster carers promote positive behaviour and manage most incidents successfully.

The agency works well with partner agencies and responds effectively to significant safeguarding concerns with children. Leaders ensure that strategy meetings are requested and conducted within appropriate time frames and the health and well-being of children are paramount. Also, the management team provides additional training and support to foster carers to meet the changing needs of children. This ensures that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to keep children safe. In contrast, the registered manager has not always informed Ofsted of significant incidents with children in a timely manner. This has the potential to prevent the regulator from carrying out its monitoring function to ensure that appropriate action is taken to safeguard children.

When appointing new staff and panel members, the management team has not always followed safe recruitment practice. For example, inspectors found that the agency had not consistently obtained appropriate references, recorded a full work history or gaps in employment and verified the reasons staff had left previous roles working with children. These shortfalls have the potential to compromise the safety of children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and responsible individual are suitably qualified and experienced to lead the agency. They are child-focused, ambitious and place children at the heart of their decision-making. Also, they take pride in the fact that they are a

local service who can keep children close to their families and support networks. Foster carers and external professionals informed the inspectors that they appreciated the constant support, commitment and dedication of the agency. Two carers stated that the support they receive is 'above and beyond' their expectations and is 'brilliant'. This supportive approach means that foster carers provide good care to children.

Leaders know important and key information about their foster carers and children. This is because they take the time to regularly visit carers and children in their homes. In addition, the management team plans and holds events to bring the agency together. For example, a fun day took place in the summer holidays and children spoke to the inspectors about the planned Christmas party. This commitment helps to create memories for children and ensures that their views and wishes are listened to.

Staff and foster carers receive regular supervision. Supervision records show that managers and staff give constant and effective challenge, give clear direction and raise actions for improvement. This helps to improve the quality of care received by children.

Foster Carers are suitably trained to meet the specific needs of the children. They use their learning from training courses and apply this to safeguard children. For example, internet safety risks are well understood, and foster carers implement strategies to keep children safe online. This means that foster carers have the skills they need to safeguard children.

The agency has an experienced agency decision-maker, who is suitably qualified and provides a clear rationale when approving foster carers. He challenges the panel when required and offers guidance for further learning. This gives further assurance that foster carers who are recruited have the skills and resilience to care for children and keep them safe.

The fostering panel is suitably diverse and provides effective quality assurance. Fostering panel members prepare for panel meetings by identifying areas of vulnerability to explore with the assessor and prospective foster carers. This provides a thorough consideration and recommendation on the prospective foster carer's suitability to foster.

Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the agency and take action to maintain its development. For example, child progress trackers are used to monitor and review children's progress. However, some of the monitoring systems developed are not yet fully embedded into practice. This means that the agency has experienced some delays in identifying shortfalls and gaps in recording systems. This has the potential to affect the quality of care received by children.

Leaders have ensured that the agency's children's guide is creative and child-focused. It provides important information to children in a format suited to their age and understanding. However, the registered manager has not regularly reviewed or

updated the agency's statement of purpose. Furthermore, it has not been sent to Ofsted. This prevents the reader from having accurate information about the services offered by the agency.

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— keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children's guide; notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 4 (a)(b)) In particular, the provider should ensure that the agency's statement of purpose is regularly reviewed and updated to accurately reflect the service. Furthermore, the registered manager should submit an updated copy to Ofsted.	14 January 2022
The fostering service provider must not— employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or; allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so. For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person— is of integrity and good character; has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform; is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform; 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)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c))	14 January 2022

In particular, the provider must ensure that it carries out all recruitment checks in line with Schedule 1 when recruiting new staff and panel members to work in the agency.	
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. Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be confirmed in writing. (Regulation 36 (1) (2)) In particular, the provider must ensure that all notifications identified in Schedule 7 of the regulations relating to significant incidents are reported to Ofsted without delay.	14 January 2022

Recommendation

- The registered person should implement a system to monitor the quality and adequacy of record-keeping in the agency and take action when needed.
(‘Fostering services: national minimum standards’, 26.2)

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: 2542463

Registered provider: Diverse Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Diverse House, 481 High Street, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 5EP

Responsible individual: Andrew Jenkinson

Registered manager: Tracy Hussain

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Inspectors

Dean Wilton, Social Care Inspector
Kevin Brammer, Social Care Inspector

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