

# Flourish Fostering

Flourish Fostering Limited

The Cedars, Holborough Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5PL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency was registered with Ofsted in April 2020. The manager registered with Ofsted on 6 April 2020.

Foster carers provide long-term respite and permanent care placements. The fostering service also provides placements for disabled children, as well as parent and child placements. At the time of inspection, there were 75 approved fostering households providing care for a total of 111 children.

### Inspection dates: 17 to 21 March 2025

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| <b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,</b> taking into account | <b>outstanding</b> |
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|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| How well children and young people are helped and protected | outstanding |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                           |      |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| The effectiveness of leaders and managers | good |
|-------------------------------------------|------|

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:** 21 June 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

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

Children are thriving because of the love, stability and guidance they receive from experienced and well-informed foster carers.

The agency's therapeutic model permeates every element of practice and firmly underpins the culture of professional curiosity and kindness. Children benefit from direct therapeutic work, which improves their outcomes and sense of well-being. Therapists work co-productively with foster carers to enable them to deliver therapeutic interventions under professional supervision. The training offer deeply embeds this in foster parents' practice, ensuring that children receive attuned and insightful care.

Unanimous feedback from children about the agency is that it 'feels like home'. Children feel safe and settled in their homes and speak highly of their foster carers. One child said of their carers, 'My family is the best.'

The regular events provided by the agency enable children to socialise with peers and to build relationships with other foster carers, as well as interacting with the agency staff and having fun. Foster carers enjoy catching up with other foster families and the events play a part in supporting and enabling 'pause' breaks for families as children are already familiar with their respite carers and enjoy their time with them.

Birth children are invited to events and felt that they are part of the fostering family. The use of virtual reality headsets demonstrates just one of the creative ways in which the agency delivers meaningful interventions to children and helps foster carers develop insight and empathy for those they care for.

Children attend appropriate educational settings. As a result, children's confidence and self-esteem are building. The level of support and encouragement provided is high and enriches the lives of children.

Foster carers are fierce advocates for the children they care for; this ensures they receive the requisite support from all agencies involved in their care planning.

Inclusivity is part of the agency's culture. Appropriately open conversations are held between foster carers and children about gender, sexuality, culture and religion. Additional allowances and training are provided to foster carers to ensure children's hair and skin are nourished appropriately, in line with both health and cultural needs.

Children questioning their gender identity and sexuality are supported to explore this in a way that is safe, and which they feel comfortable with.

Children's heritage is celebrated. Foster carers support religious needs and beliefs, therefore children can explore and maintain their identity.

Children have a voice that is heard and acted upon. This is because they have built positive relationships with staff and carers. The children's forum has had a positive impact on relationships overall.

Foster carers prioritise the health and well-being of children. Children attend regular appointments, with specialist treatment provided when necessary.

Children's achievements are recognised. The encouragement shown sets them up for life, knowing that what they achieve matters. From foster parent logs to annual award ceremonies, every achievement for every child is celebrated.

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

Children say that they feel safe. The nature of relationships built with their carers provides a platform for open, honest and transparent discussions.

Foster carers support and help children take age-appropriate risks and learn from them. Children are encouraged to explore their surroundings, to discover the wider world, and do not shy away from the normality of everyday modern life and the challenges this brings.

Foster carers are aware of the vulnerabilities of their children and provide an appropriate level of support and supervision for each child they care for. The agency's proactive approach to multidisciplinary working ensures that risks are responded to in line with their individual care plans.

Missing-from-care incidents are managed in line with a clear and helpful policy and in a well-coordinated manner to minimise risks for children. Foster carers speak about their deep appreciation for the support they receive from the agency when a child they are caring for goes missing.

Children know how to complain and are supported by their foster carers when they wish to raise a concern. Allegations against foster carers are managed effectively and in a timely way. Communication with local authority designated officers indicates that the agency has a strong approach to risk. Recording is thorough and learning is embedded back into practice. Effective, timely management oversight ensures that there is no drift.

Training for foster carers is documented and well organised. Additional, bespoke training that has been identified through learning, supervision groups and placement endings is of an excellent standard.

Staff are appropriately qualified and have the necessary skills to support foster carers to safeguard children effectively.

Regular informed supervision of foster carers and the well-attended supervision groups offer foster carers a platform to share experiences, learn and reflect. As a result, early indications of foster parent fatigue, or even breakdown, have been identified and addressed swiftly.

Unannounced visits are completed in line with the agency's policy. This provides confidence that homes are safe.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

A strength of the agency is the committed, determined and remarkable leadership team, whose members work tirelessly to continually improve the agency.

The staff are equally passionate and dedicated to the children, the foster carers they support, and the agency; they have a wealth of experience and knowledge that they share with each other. As a result, foster carers receive well-informed, consistent support. Foster carers describe supervising social workers as 'approachable', 'understanding' and 'responsive'.

Staff receive regular professional supervision which is of a good quality and considers matters relating to children, carers and safeguarding. This helps ensure compliance in relation to record-keeping, training and processes. Staff supervision also considers the welfare and professional development of the team.

Safer recruitment processes are methodical, with a designated individual who is responsible for completing all checks. Disclosure and Barring Service checks are undertaken and a copy of the update service is held on file. However, there is no formal record of the original certificates being checked and no recording of the oversight from the registered manager.

Foster carers are considered to be professionals by the agency and are encouraged and supported to broaden their skills and knowledge, both in terms of mandatory training as well as the opportunity to study for level 3 and 5 diplomas, which is a considerable investment made by the agency. Training, Support and Development Standards have been recorded for most carers within the agency. However, there are a small number of occasions when the agency has not retained completion dates for carers.

Regular supervision and reflective practice are provided to foster carers, which gives them the opportunity to receive bespoke guidance and support for their individual children's needs, as well as carers being able to be supported for any personal issues that may arise. Foster parents say they feel valued by the agency.

Assessment of carer suitability is thorough, well evidenced and scrutinised through rigorous quality assurance processes and a capable, diverse panel. The agency is responsive to instruction from the panel and receptive to the insights of the agency decision-maker.

Though new in post, the agency decision-maker is highly knowledgeable and has the appropriate level of experience to fulfil the role. Decision-making is timely, and recommendations made are in line with the overriding objective of promoting the welfare of children.

The registered manager has oversight of individual foster families and the wider service through supervision and other forums. However, the day-to-day oversight of records is not recorded, leading to a risk of drift and delay in responding to some issues. Additionally, the registered manager has not been submitting quality of care reviews to the regulator in a timely way. This inhibits the registered manager's ability to demonstrate effective responses to patterns and trends but has not had a negative impact on children and the care they receive nor the functioning of the agency.

Managers are very clear about shortfalls, as well as strengths, and have put a number of things in place to tackle them, including the introduction of a quality assurance manager, which is aimed at improving the level of management scrutiny and oversight of the service as a whole, and the implementation of a new electronic recording system.

Through effective, dedicated and tenacious leadership, the agency is providing exemplary care to children.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that records show the date on which each check on recruitment records was completed and who carried out the check (Fostering services: national minimum standards, 19.4)
- The registered person should ensure that they regularly monitor all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (Fostering services: national minimum standards, paragraph 25.2)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are able to evidence that the Training, Support and Development Standards have been attained within 12 months of approval (or within 18 months for family and friends foster carers). For foster carers who were approved as such before April 2008, the Standards are attained by April 2011 (or by April 2012 for family and friends foster carers). Fostering households may use the same evidence workbook. (Fostering services: national minimum standards, paragraph 20.3)

### **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:** 2568217

**Registered provider:** Flourish Fostering Limited

**Registered provider address:** The Cedars, Holborough Road, Snodland, Kent ME6 5PL

**Responsible individual:** Michelle Brunton-Douglas

**Registered manager:** Karen Heard

**Telephone number:** 01634 969050

## **Inspectors**

Emma Haskell, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Tash Williams, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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