

Avanti Fostering

Avanti Fostering Ltd

Devonshire House, 582 Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1JS

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Avanti Fostering is an independent fostering agency that has been operating since June 2020.

The manager registered with Ofsted on 5 April 2022.

The agency provides short-term, long-term, emergency, and parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had eight approved fostering households, providing foster care for nine children.

Inspection dates: 8 to 12 August 2022

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: 20 September 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: inadequate

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The agency provides an effective fostering service. Children live with nurturing foster families and they receive individualised high-quality care and support. All seven children spoken to talked very positively about their experiences.

The agency makes a positive difference to children's lives. One child said, 'Without my foster carers, I don't know where I would be.' The children's social workers recognise the enormous progress that children make when they are cared for by this agency's foster carers.

Children experience increased stability in their lives. There have been no unplanned endings since the last inspection. Careful matching and the agency's ongoing support contributes to placement stability.

The agency's foster carers are committed to the children. They show resilience when faced with challenges. For example, when children's needs significantly change, the foster carers make sure that the children get the care and support that they need.

The agency works closely with health services and placing authorities to ensure that children receive the specialist help and medical input that they need. All foster carers receive training in administering medication and they are committed to promoting children's physical and emotional health.

Foster carers make sure that children feel part of the family. At the same time, foster carers understand the importance of children maintaining positive relationships with their parents. Children benefit from seeing their foster carers respect and work in partnership with their parents.

The agency promotes diversity and individuality. Foster carers ensure that children are listened to and are supported to develop their identities. A child's independent reviewing officer praised his foster carer for helping him to explore and express his identity.

Foster carers support children's education and learning. Children's school attendance and educational attainment are good. Children enjoy learning and are confident about their futures. A social worker said, 'They [the child] have made phenomenal progress in education since being placed with this agency's foster carers.'

Foster carers make sure that children have enjoyable experiences and opportunities to be playful and creative. Some children are developing their skills in acting. Others are writing music and enjoying sports and nature.

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

Children are safe and they said that they feel safe and protected by the adults around them. There have not been any major safeguarding concerns since the last inspection.

The agency has a clear focus on safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. This is evident in each stage of the foster carer approval process, and also in matching and decision-making. The comprehensive training and regular supervision provided to foster carers contributes to the effective safeguarding of children.

The agency's thorough risk assessment processes increase children's safety. Foster carers understand risk and they know how to safeguard children. Risks such as child sexual and criminal exploitation are managed well and have reduced considerably for some children.

Safer care plans protect everybody within the foster family. Foster carers understand the importance of boundaries. They provide warm and structured environments, so that children feel secure and they flourish. Children's behaviours improve significantly over time.

The close relationships that children develop with their foster families are a strong safeguarding factor in the children's lives. The majority of children do not go missing from home. Local multi-agency protocols and individual safeguarding plans are consistently followed when children do go missing from home.

There have been no new allegations made since the last inspection. The agency has reflected on and learned from previous allegations and investigations, which has secured better practices. This includes more robust matching and better record-keeping. All foster carers have been given training on dealing with allegations.

Supervising social workers see children's bedrooms regularly and ensure that the physical environment remains safe. However, the agency's annual health and safety checks of fostering households are not always completed in a timely manner. There have been no accidents since the last inspection and all foster carers are trained in first aid.

A thorough staff recruitment process ensures that all staff are suitable for their roles.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has confidently led this agency from inadequate to good fostering practices. All the failures identified at the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Everyone spoken to talked optimistically about the positive changes achieved by the manager.

The manager has created a culture of high expectations throughout the agency. They have put in place systems and processes that enable staff and foster carers to

provide a good standard of care for children. The manager routinely monitors children's progress and outcomes.

The manager advocates well for children to ensure that they receive support in all areas of their development. The children's social workers spoke positively about the agency's joint working with external professionals.

The agency fulfils its statement of purpose. The manager ensures that foster carers are suitable and have everything that they need to promote the welfare of children. The support, supervision and training that foster carers receive equips them to undertake their roles effectively.

A robust fostering panel and an independent decision-maker ensure that children's best interests are at the heart of the agency's decisions. A quality-assurance officer provides additional scrutiny to the overall monitoring of the service.

The agency keeps records that demonstrate good care and positive outcomes for children. However, the quality of some records is inconsistent. For example, foster care agreements are not always signed, and not all foster families have child-friendly profiles.

The agency has an improvement plan. This includes developing a more efficient system for record-keeping and the responsible individual providing more visible leadership. All staff, including the registered manager, receive regular supervision and have good training opportunities. However, the provider does not carry out probationary appraisals of staff's individual performance before confirming their posts. This is a missed opportunity to reflect together on the staff practices and progress and agree professional development plans that are based on these reflections.

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 all permanent appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation. (Requirement 21 (1)(a))	1 October 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that an annual review of health and safety matters takes place for each foster home. This is to confirm that the required relevant health and safety checks have been carried out and that the physical environment remains safe. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 10.3)
- The registered person should ensure that the agency has an efficient system in place for record-keeping. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.1)

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: 2587129

Registered provider: Avanti Fostering Ltd

Registered provider address: Devonshire House, 582 Honeypot Lane, Stanmore, Middlesex HA7 1JS

Responsible individual: Dilber Bhamra

Registered manager: Katharine Tumilty

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Inspectors

Seka Graovac, Social Care Inspector
Victoria Jones, Social Care Inspector (shadow)

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