

Empower Fostering Limited

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Unit 2 Prockters Farm Offices, West Monkton, Taunton, Somerset TA2 8QN

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency's statement of purpose states that it provides individual foster care placements and therapeutic support packages for children and young people. The service will be delivered according to the identified need and will offer a stable and consistent experience of family life, that will enhance children and young people's life opportunities.

The agency was registered with Ofsted in February 2021. This is the agency's first inspection. The registered manager has been in post since February 2021 and is suitably 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.

Inspection dates: 7 to 11 February 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

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: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Since the agency was registered in February 2021, the agency has managed well the challenges due to the pandemic, in particular, the impact on its expected growth. However, foster carers have been recruited and the registered manager is confident of further growth.

Foster carers are comprehensively assessed and prepared to foster children. Assessments are rigorous and evidence well the scrutiny applied by the assessor and the panel. One foster carer was extremely positive of the sensitive and supportive nature of the whole process, from expressing an interest to attending panel. They say they found the experience to be 'excellent'.

A strength of the agency is the comprehensive package of training and support that is available to foster carers. Weekly access to a therapeutic practitioner is noteworthy. As a result of this dedicated support, one child has been able to make significant progress since living with their foster carers. The foster carer of this child spoke with love and pride of the progress the child has made since being placed with them.

Unfortunately, one child's placement started too quickly, and ended soon after they were placed. The ending of this placement was unavoidable, despite the attempts by the agency to support the carers. Learning from this event has already been taken by the agency.

Foster carers and professionals speak highly of the agency. The views of foster carers, children and professionals are gathered by the agency. However, managers and leaders are aware that further work is required to promote consultation and participation in the continued development of the agency.

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

Children living with foster carers are kept safe because those working for the agency and the foster carers understand well the safeguarding needs of the children. The inspector found that safer care plans detail the risks well and they are regularly reviewed.

Records capture the skilled approaches applied by the foster carers when supporting children's behaviours. In addition, the agency has outreach workers offering much-valued additional support to carers and children.

For one child who is non-verbal and has complex behavioural needs, the records show the significant progress he has made. This is because the foster carers have learned how to better support him when he is upset, confused or not able to understand.

Unannounced visits to foster carers take place at least twice a year. Recordings of these visits are detailed and demonstrate that the children are living in safe and secure homes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and the responsible individual are extremely visible in the agency and are child-focused. The ethos of providing children with the best possible care clearly comes across. The inspector observed positive working relationships among the staff who work for the agency.

The registered manager understands the weaknesses and strengths of the agency. The agency remains in its infancy and growth has not been at the expected rate. However, the registered manager has been able to dedicate his time to focus on building a strong platform to grow from. For the upcoming year predicted growth is positive.

The registered manager has ensured that there are sufficient resources in place to support the recruitment, assessment and day-to day support of foster carers. For example, weekly support is provided by a therapeutic practitioner and a team of outreach workers provides foster carers with support in their homes. This reduces the need for children to move to another carer for respite.

The IT system used by the agency shows signs of being one that is effective, safe, and provides the manager with an excellent means of management oversight.

The fostering panel functions effectively, is safe and provides support and challenge appropriately. The panel chair and members are experienced in the field of social care. The agency decision-maker remains independent of the agency and she provides an appropriate level of scrutiny and challenge.

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

Recommendation

- Whenever possible, children are able to visit the foster carer's home and to talk with the foster carers in private prior to a placement decision being made. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 11.3)

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: 2616251

Registered provider: Empower Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 2 Prockters Farm Offices, West Monkton,
Taunton, Somerset TA2 8QN

Responsible individual: Jupiter McVeigh

Registered manager: Dean Hallett

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Inspector

Linda Bond, Social Care Inspector

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