

Embrace Fostering Service

Embrace Therapeutic Fostering Services

Mayflower Cottage, Clumber Park, Worksop S80 3BQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Embrace Fostering Service registered with Ofsted on 22 February 2022. It is managed by an experienced manager and responsible individual. The agency offers a range of placements for children. These include respite, bridging, emergency, long- and short-term placements and permanency. The agency also supports foster carers to provide placements for sanctuary-seeking children.

Currently, this service supports three fostering households and cares for four children.

Inspection dates: 23 to 27 January 2023

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

Children, foster carers and stakeholders are all positive about the care that children receive and there is evidence that all children are making progress. One child's nursery shared about a child:

'It was magical. There was a visible transformation, not just physical but their personality really came through. The child had a new haircut, new clothes, but it was more than that, they would play peekaboo, they took an interest in adults, it was like a magic wand had been raised.'

Another child's school praised the foster carer for how well they have met the child's identity and cultural needs.

All children attend education. One foster carer supports a child's love of reading by buying books and has supported the child to get a library card. However, children attend school at a distance from their home, and foster carers feel unable to support with transportation. This has an impact on children because not all children have consistency in who takes them and brings them back from school.

The fostering service has a good understanding of children's health needs, and foster carers make healthcare appointments for children. Children have not been with their foster carers for very long and relationships are still building. As time passes, foster carers are getting to know the children's emotional health and well-being needs better. The manager is trying to source grief and loss training for one foster carer so that they can better meet the needs of the child in their care. The manager is proactive and will source wider training wherever necessary.

Foster carers have varied experience and ability to work alongside children's families. Not all foster carers have met children's families. Some foster carers have been reluctant to do so. However, some foster carers agreed to invite one child's siblings to join them for Christmas day at very short notice. This day was enjoyed by all, and the foster carers put in lots of effort to make the day celebratory, which included getting the siblings gifts and putting on a festive spread.

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

When prospective foster carers have made enquiries to the fostering service, the manager has been diligent in checking their reasons for wanting to foster. There has been a good level of professional curiosity shown and all necessary statutory checks have been carried out.

Where applicants have not been successful in their application to foster, reasons for refusal are clear and there is full transparency with applicants. Applicants are also issued with complaints procedures following refusal visits. However, the complaint forms issued advise applicants to raise concerns with the registered manager. Due to

the registered manager carrying out the enquiry visits, this would not be an impartial person for applicants to contact. Going forward, the service has identified the responsible individual as the new point of contact. This is to improve professional scrutiny and objectivity.

Fostering assessments are well written and clearly outline applicants' suitability to foster. Where foster carers have transferred from other fostering agencies, protocol meetings have taken place and there has been good information-sharing. The manager has met with previously cared for children who are now adults as part of the fostering assessment. Their views were listened to and taken seriously.

The fostering service has a holistic approach to care practice. The safety and well-being of all household members are considered and reflected on. For example, where one foster carer cares for an adult with disabilities, the manager has made efforts to get to know this person and understand their level of vulnerability. Although the safety and well-being of all members of the fostering household are considered paramount, where foster carers' adult children have carried out caring responsibilities for children, assessments have not been carried out by the fostering service. This is necessary to ensure suitability.

Where one child arrived with inappropriate clothing and footwear, this was raised as a point of concern by the manager and escalated to the child's local authority. The child was quickly bought new clothing, which helped to improve their sense of self-worth. This is a good example of the fostering service advocating on behalf of the child.

Since the fostering service became operational, no child has been involved in any situation which has put their safety at risk.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has a proactive approach to care, and she makes every effort to meet the needs of each child and foster carer who use the service. Children know the manager and have met her several times. The manager's priority is to keep leaders in the organisation visible and contactable to foster carers and children. Although this hands-on approach is positive, the manager is mindful that, as the service grows, other professionals in the agency will need to take on more of this role. This is so that the manager can focus on the operational management of the fostering service.

Despite being newly formed, there is a wealth of experience and diversity on the panel. Prior to commencing panel duties, the fostering service carried out a mock panel, using a hypothetical fostering assessment. Panel members found this experience helpful, and it was a valuable training exercise. Panel members ask fostering applicants relevant questions, and foster carers are positive about their panel experience. After each panel meeting, panel members have time to reflect and to consider what has worked and what could be better. The agency decision-maker makes well-evidenced decisions and their advice for the fostering agency is valuable.

Although there are examples of good practice, not all professionals know what the processes are for when applicants are not considered suitable to foster. Also, processes are not yet formalised for panel appraisals. Panel minutes do not yet stipulate whether panel is quorate or whether matters of conflict of interest have been discussed. The manager and responsible individual agree that these are areas for development, and they have a plan in place to address this.

There is a strong emphasis on learning and development in this fostering service. Availability of foster carer training is good, and all foster carers are registered with the National Association of Therapeutic Parents and FosterTalk. Foster carers receive regular supervision, and they describe support from the fostering service as 'excellent'.

Due to the fostering service being newly formed, the manager and one director are carrying out most of the day-to-day work. This includes carrying out assessments, supervising foster carers and overseeing the care of children. Although the manager and director receive supervision, this is not always specific to the type of work being carried out.

Overall, processes could be strengthened to improve professional scrutiny and objectivity. This is acknowledged by the fostering agency and steps are being taken to address this.

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

Recommendations

- The service should implement a proportionate approach to any risk assessment. The registered person should ensure that adults in the fostering household are appropriately assessed prior to caring for children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.5)
- The written report on the applicant's suitability to be approved as a foster carer should set out clearly all the information that the fostering panel and decision-maker need to make an objective approval decision. The reports should be accurate, up to date and include evidence-based information that distinguishes between fact, opinion and third-party information. The reports should be prepared, signed and dated by the social worker who assessed the prospective foster carer and be countersigned and dated by the fostering team manager or a team manager of another of the provider's fostering teams. The registered person should ensure that it is clear who has quality assured any assessments being presented to panel. Foster carers' terms of approval should be specific to their suitability. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.7)
- The panel chair should ensure that written minutes of panel meetings are accurate and clearly cover the key issues and views expressed by panel members and record the reasons for its recommendation. The panel chair should ensure that panel minutes state whether the panel is quorate or not. Furthermore, panel minutes should evidence that panel members have been asked about any conflicts of interest. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.7)
- The supervising social worker should ensure that each foster carer he or she supervises is informed in writing of, and accepts, understands and operates within, all regulations and standards and with policies and guidance agreed by the fostering service. The registered person should ensure that foster carers are clear of what is expected of them. Unless a child's family poses a direct risk to foster carers, foster carers should always be willing to work alongside families. This is to promote the best interests of children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.9)
- Assessment and appraisal of all staff involved in fostering work should take account of identified skills needed for particular roles and be used to identify individuals' learning and development needs. The registered person should ensure that appraisal processes are in place for panel members. The registered person should ensure that the responsible individual, panel chair, vice-chair and agency decision-maker carry out necessary training to fill any knowledge gaps relating to panel and complaints processes. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 23.5)
- All staff, volunteers and the registered person should be properly managed and supported and understand who they are accountable to. The registered person should ensure that staff receive regular supervision that directly relates to the role

that they are carrying out. The registered person would benefit from reflective supervision. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.2)

- There should be clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. This includes the financial viability of the service, any serious incidents, allegations or complaints about the service and ensuring the quality of the service. The registered person should ensure that an independent person manages complaints. The registered person should ensure that no person reviews any incidents if there could be a potential conflict of interest. The responsible individual should endeavour to source training in complaints management. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.1)

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: 2661954

Registered provider: Embrace Therapeutic Fostering Services

Registered provider address: Mayflower Clumber Cottage, Clumber Park,
Worksop, Nottinghamshire S80 3BQ

Responsible individual: Derrell Crump

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Inspector

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector

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