

Soundly Fostering

Soundly Fostering Limited

Camvac Business Hub, Burrell Way, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3QY

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This privately owned independent fostering agency provides short-term, long-term and parent-and-child placements.

The agency and manager registered with Ofsted in January 2022.

The agency currently has 15 approved fostering households with 27 foster carers. The agency currently cares for 28 children. Two young adults live with their foster carers in a staying put arrangement.

Inspection dates: 16 to 20 February 2026

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: 30 January 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Foster carers are committed to the children who live with them and children often remain with their carers long-term. This gives many children stability over several years. Children sometimes stay living with their carers when they reach 18 under 'staying put' arrangements. These offer children a bridge to independence until they are ready to move out. One carer helped a child to find alternative suitable accommodation once they turned 18 in line with the child's wishes to move out.

Foster carers support sensitive and planned moves for children. The agency seeks relevant information from professionals to inform decision making about which carers can best support children. Carers often meet with children several times, and children routinely visit the foster carers home before they move in. This helps children to settle into their new home. Sometimes children have needed to move out of foster carers' homes when carers are no longer able to meet their needs. This only occurs after all other support options have been exhausted with the agency and local authority. Although children may not be able to remain living with carers, they usually move out in planned ways and rarely move out as an emergency.

Children have good relationships with their carers. Foster carers know their children well, they speak positively about children and celebrate their progress and achievements. One child said they feel protected and loved living with their foster carer.

Children are able to share their views with the agency through a dedicated forum for any children living in the household. This includes children who are fostered, birth children or children living under a special guardianship order. This helps to ensure all children feel included and for their voices to be heard. Children make suggestions for events across the year and they are asked to contribute to information new children receive from the fostering agency. Children know how to share their worries with the agency staff and no children have made complaints.

Foster carers support children to have their health and wellbeing needs met. Children regularly attend health reviews and visit the opticians or dentist as required. If issues arise carers are responsive to seeking treatment. When children have worries about their mental health the agency and their carers advocate for relevant support. Carers have ensured that appropriate referrals have been made for those children who need additional support for their wellbeing.

All children are in education and attend settings that meet their educational needs. Carers and the agency are quick to advocate for education support to ensure children, do not have gaps in their education. At times the agency has sourced additional tutoring to bridge the gap between children moving in and new educational settings being found. Sometimes children need to move schools as part of their plans to live with foster carers. Children's school moves are planned sensitively and carers support children to make successful school moves.

Foster carers help children to develop their independence skills. They support children to gain employment, to navigate public transport and to be independent with household skills like cooking and cleaning.

Carers ensure that children have access to a range of activities, experiences and opportunities. Children join clubs and try new sports. Some children have spent time abroad with their carers. The agency offers additional enrichment with activity events across the year for children including tubing and trampolining. All children in the family are invited, including wider family members of the foster carers. The agency also invites siblings of children who are not living with them. This helps to promote a fostering community and a family event where everyone is included.

Assessments and annual reviews for foster carers use a variety of feedback to inform recommendations about continuing suitability to foster. However, on one occasion when changes were made, which were different to the original assessment about the fostering household, it is not clear how children's voices were considered and what this change means for them.

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

Foster carers understand their responsibilities to keep children safe, foster carers have relevant safeguarding training and respond with care to children if there are concerns.

Occasionally, some children have self-harmed whilst living with their carers. Foster carers respond to children with care, offer first aid and help children to talk about their feelings. If carers have further worries, they share this with the agency and the child's social worker appropriately to ensure the right mental health support can be accessed.

Children rarely go missing from the foster carer's home. On occasions when children have left the home they are usually only missing for a short period of time and have remained close to home. Carers manage these incidents well. When there are changes in behaviour and potential risks for children the agency make sure relevant assessments and plans are updated. This ensures there is clear information provided to carers about how they should respond to keep children safe.

Children rarely need to be physically held by their foster carers. When this does occur, it is proportionate and is used only to keep them safe. The agency ensures there is clear review of all incidents and involve relevant partner professionals in the reviews. The agency supports carers with additional training and reflective sessions to help them to best support children at times of distress. This multi-agency response supports the foster carers and children to build trust.

Foster carers understand the risks the internet may pose to children. Carers have a good understanding of safety measures to use on devices in the household to help keep children safe. The agency provides external training to help foster carers to

reflect on online risks as well as child exploitation. In addition, specific sessions take place with children to help them think about ways to keep safe online and in their community.

The agency responds quickly to any concerns about foster carers and undertakes suitable further assessments or investigations. The responsible individual and manager lead risk management meetings and reflective learning sessions when development issues are identified. Foster carers return to panel for early review following any standard of care concerns. The agency follows any identified additional support plans with carers. This helps to assure the agency that foster carers are undertaking learning and development to improve safety and support for children.

The agency generally follows safer recruitment processes and ensures new social workers and panel members have appropriate suitability checks. However, a gap in one staff's employment record was not demonstrably fully explored by the agency. This does not help the agency to assure themselves all checks are suitable for new staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The small independent agency is owned by the responsible individual and registered manager. They provide consistency to the agency and foster carers. Their stated aim is to offer a bespoke service to foster carers with a family-oriented culture. Both remain committed to the vision of the agency and developing the service in line with their statement of purpose.

Foster carers are positive about the support they receive from the agency. The manager and responsible individual know them well. Consequently, carers describe the agency as having a family feel. Foster carers receive regular supervision sessions with their supervising social workers. The registered manager is pro-active in providing additional support to carers alongside their supervising social workers. Foster carers are offered reflective sessions with an independent social worker at times of challenge. One carer said, 'Their [agency staff's] care extends further than just the children in our care. They always ask about our families as well, showing true support to us.'

The agency offers a suitable varied training offer for foster carers. This includes training both online and face-to-face. Bespoke training is offered to individual carers to help them meet children's specific needs. Foster carers said this training was 'fantastic' and gave them the right skills to support their children.

Foster carers capture children's progress and achievements in the records they write, as well as sensitively noting challenges. Foster carers continue to show positive regard for children even at times of challenge. Children who access their records will likely benefit from a balanced and thoughtful picture of their time living with their carers.

Staff feel well supported by leaders and managers. Supervising social workers benefit from reflective sessions with the independent therapeutic practitioner as well as useful supervision sessions with the manager. This helps supervising social workers to reflect on the care and support needs of their foster carers and children. Caseloads are low, which provides supervising social workers time to spend with families.

Fostering recruitment and assessment sufficiently explores all relevant areas of the prospective foster carers lives and experiences. Social workers undertaking any assessments are appropriately supervised and the assessments are quality assured effectively. This helps to provide panel with the best information to make a recommendation about a foster carer's suitability.

The panel is effective. The experienced panel chair leads a professionally diverse range of panel members who support the functions of panel. The fostering panel offers helpful feedback to the agency and provides suitable recommendations to the similarly effective agency decision maker. Detailed records of decisions made are held. This professional scrutiny ensures the right carers are approved to support children.

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

Recommendations

- The registered provider should demonstrate, including from written records, that it consistently follows good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in foster carer selection and staff and panel member recruitment. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 19.2)
- The registered person should ensure that the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring foster carers and developing the fostering service. In particular, ensuring all members of the fostering household are clearly consulted about changes. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards' 1.7)

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: 2665004

Registered provider: Soundly Fostering Limited

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Inspectors

Rebecca Hannell, Social Care Inspector

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