

Clover Fostering

Clover Fostering, The Atrium, 1 Harefield Road, Uxbridge UB8 1PH

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Clover Fostering is a privately owned independent fostering agency. It registered with Ofsted on 3 March 2023. The agency's statement of purpose states that the fostering agency provides respite, bridging, short-term and long-term placements and placements where brothers and sisters can live together.

At the time of this monitoring visit, the fostering agency was suspended. All fostering households had resigned from the service, and there were no fostering households approved by the fostering agency.

A new manager was appointed in August 2024 and took up her post in September 2024. She has not yet applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 5 November 2024

Date of previous inspection: 12 March 2024

This monitoring visit

Ofsted completed a full inspection of this independent fostering agency between 12 and 14 March 2024. The inspection identified significant and widespread shortfalls in the operation of the agency. As a result, the fostering agency was judged to be inadequate. Ofsted issued a notice of suspension to the fostering agency on 14 March 2024.

Ofsted completed a monitoring visit of the service on 28 May 2024. Inspectors found that the fostering provider had complied with the notice of suspension. However, there continued to be serious and widespread omissions in the arrangements of the fostering agency. There was a lack of progress to address the significant shortfalls identified at the full inspection in March 2024. As a result, Ofsted issued a further notice of suspension to the fostering agency on 7 June 2024.

On 21 and 22 August, Ofsted completed a further monitoring visit to the fostering agency. Again, the fostering provider had complied with the notice of suspension. However, the continued serious and widespread omissions left the fostering provider unable to fulfil their regulatory responsibilities. A further notice of suspension was issued on 30 August 2024.

This announced monitoring visit was undertaken to review compliance with the suspension notice and to review progress by the fostering provider to meet the requirements and recommendations that remained from the full inspection in March 2024.

Inspectors found that the fostering provider had again complied with the notice of suspension.

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been a number of changes to the management arrangements of the agency. The appointment of a new responsible individual was notified to Ofsted on 20 September 2024. This appointment was subsequently retracted on 24 September 2024, and the previous responsible individual remains in post. A new manager was appointed in August 2024, taking up post in September 2024. Both the manager and the responsible individual told inspectors that this is not a permanent arrangement. As a result of these multiple changes, Ofsted cannot be assured of the stability of the leadership and management of the service. This is a vulnerability in the provider's ability to drive the necessary improvements.

The fostering service continues to be without a safely recruited agency decision-maker, panel chair or panel members. This means that the agency is unable to perform regulatory functions relating to the approval, review or termination of foster carers' approval.

The responsible individual continues to allow people to work for the fostering agency without full recruitment checks being in place. For example, the responsible individual told inspectors that the new manager took up their post without full recruitment checks being received. This ongoing breach of regulation fails to demonstrate that the responsible individual understands and can take action to address shortfalls in the service.

There are continued patterns of managers not taking action when practice does not meet expected standards. For example, the local authority designated officer requested independent investigations in response to safeguarding concerns in two fostering households. The responsible individual decided to commission these externally. The resulting investigation reports did not contain the required level of detail to fully understand these serious concerns. Despite this, neither the responsible individual nor the manager took action to address this. Their inaction fails to demonstrate that the fostering service prioritises the safety and welfare of children.

The responsible individual has not ensured that a recent serious complaint was investigated or documented. This does not assure Ofsted that there are systems in place to understand the experience of those who come into contact with the service or to learn from these.

Managers have begun to develop new policies and procedures to underpin agency practice. Although these show some evidence of progress, with one requirement being met, the developments do not go far enough. For example, the process for the assessment of prospective foster carers now reflects the stages set out in statutory guidance. However, inspectors again identified examples of policies containing information that is not relevant to this provider. This means that the new policies and procedures cannot be relied on to provide clear information to staff or foster carers. Managers acknowledged that they have a long way to go in this area.

Ofsted has again requested that the responsible individual disclose information about the finances of the fostering agency. This is to provide the regulator with assurances as to the ongoing financial stability and viability of the fostering service.

Eight requirements that remain from the previous inspection have been restated.

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, The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must— keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children’s guide, notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days, and if the children’s guide is revised, supply a copy to each foster parent approved by the fostering service provider, and to each child placed by them (subject to the child’s age and understanding). (Regulation 4(a)(b)(c)) In particular, ensure that the statement of purpose reflects the services that the fostering agency provides and that when this is updated, a copy is supplied to the Chief Inspector within 28 days. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated in part.	6 January 2025
The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to— the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency, carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that where concerns are raised regarding social work practice, these are managed, reported and escalated to relevant registration bodies.	6 January 2025

Additionally, ensure that staff of the fostering agency engage with planning processes, reviews and arrangements for children alongside foster carers and other professionals, retaining oversight of children's plans and care. Additionally, ensure that the records of the agency are individual, do not use cut and paste, do not reflect other fostering agencies and provide evidence of individualised decision-making. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (1)(a)) In particular, ensure that agency practice is delivered in a way that provides oversight of the safety of, and the quality of, care provided to children placed with foster carers. This includes regular visits by social work staff to foster homes and regular meetings with all household members. Also, the effective use of unannounced visits to understand the child's day-to-day experiences. Additionally, ensure that individual risk assessments and safe care plans are in place to inform the care of all children placed. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	6 January 2025
The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care	6 January 2025

plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (1) (3)) In particular, ensure that foster carers are provided with and supported to engage in training relevant to their role and to the individual needs of the children in their care. Additionally, ensure that foster carers are provided with all the necessary information to enable them to provide individualised care to children, in line with their current plans. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 18 (4))	6 January 2025
The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, having regard to— the size of the fostering service, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by it, and the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 19(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that there are sufficient staff, including qualified and registered social workers, for the fostering agency to operate in line with regulations and guidance. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	6 January 2025
The fostering service provider must not— employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.	6 January 2025

This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service. For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person— is of integrity and good character, has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform, is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform, and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. The fostering service provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that any person working for a fostering service who is not employed by the fostering service, and to whom paragraph (2) does not apply, is appropriately supervised while carrying out their duties. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c) (4)) In particular, ensure that agency recruitment processes adhere to this regulation. Additionally, ensure that only staff who are qualified and registered to practice as a social worker are employed in posts designated for social workers. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them— receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4) (a)) In particular, ensure that all staff receive supervision from a suitably qualified individual, including the registered manager. Additionally, ensure that all staff receive an annual appraisal of their performance.	6 January 2025

Additionally, ensure that suitable training is made available for all staff relevant to their roles and the service that is delivered by the fostering agency. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
The functions of the fostering panel in respect of cases referred to it by the fostering service provider are— to consider each application for approval and to recommend whether or not a person is suitable to be a foster parent, where it recommends approval of an application, to recommend any terms on which the approval is to be given, to recommend whether or not a person remains suitable to be a foster parent, and whether or not the terms of their approval (if any) remain appropriate— on the first review carried out in accordance with regulation 28(2), and on the occasion of any other review, if requested to do so by the fostering service provider in accordance with regulation 28(5), and to consider any case referred to it under regulation 27(9) or 28(10). In considering what recommendation to make under paragraph (1), the fostering panel— must consider and take into account all of the information passed to it in accordance with regulation 26, 27 or 28 (as the case may be), may request the fostering service provider to obtain any other relevant information or to provide such other assistance as the fostering panel considers necessary, and may obtain such legal advice or medical advice as it considers necessary. In relation to the case of a person in respect of whom a report has been prepared in accordance with regulation 26(3), the fostering panel must either—	6 January 2025

request the fostering service provider to prepare a further written report, covering all the matters set out in regulation 26(2)(c); or

recommend that the person is not suitable to be a foster parent.

Inserted by Reg 12 of the Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015

The fostering service provider must obtain such information as the fostering panel considers necessary and send that information to the panel, and provide such other assistance as the fostering panel may request, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The fostering panel must also—

advise, where appropriate, on the procedures under which reviews in accordance with regulation 28 are carried out by the fostering service provider, and periodically monitor their effectiveness,

oversee the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service provider, and

give advice, and make recommendations, on such other matters or cases as the fostering service provider may refer to it.

In this regulation "recommend" means recommend to the fostering service provider.

(Regulation 25 (1)(a)(b)(c)(i)(ii)(d) (2)(a)(b)(c) (2A)(a)(b) (3) (4)(a)(b)(c) (5))

In particular, ensure that the fostering agency provides the panel with information to date that is up to date, accurate and of sufficient detail to enable the panel to make a recommendation of suitability.

Additionally, ensure that the fostering panel understands and acts on their responsibility in relation to overseeing the conduct of assessments completed by the fostering service.

This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.

The registered provider must carry on the fostering agency in such manner as is likely to ensure that it will be financially viable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in its statement of purpose.

25 November 2024

The registered provider must—

ensure that adequate accounts are maintained and kept up to date in respect of the fostering agency, and

supply a copy of the accounts, if requested to do so, to the Chief Inspector.

The registered provider must provide the Chief Inspector with information requested for the purpose of considering the financial viability of the fostering agency, including—

the annual accounts of the fostering agency, certified by an accountant,

a reference from a bank expressing an opinion as to the registered provider's financial standing,

information as to the financing and financial resources of the fostering agency,

where the registered provider is a company, information as to any of its associated companies, and

a certificate of insurance for the registered provider in respect of liability which may be incurred by him in relation to the fostering agency in respect of death, injury, public liability, damage or other loss.

In this regulation one company is associated with another if one of them has control of the other, or both are under the control of the same person or company.

(Regulation 37 (1) (2)(a)(b) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e) (4))

In particular, ensure that the information requested is provided to the Chief Inspector by midday on the stated date.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2704179

Registered provider: Clover Fostering

Registered provider address: The Atrium, 1 Harefield Road, Uxbridge UB8 1PH

Registered manager: Post vacant

Responsible individual: Salman Idrees

Inspectors

Tracey Cogan Greig, Social Care Inspector
Jenny-Ellen Scotland, Social Care Inspector

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