

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

The agency registered with Ofsted on 3 March 2023 and is privately owned. The statement of purpose states that the agency provides emergency, respite and short breaks, bridging, short- and long-term placements, parent and child placements, solo placements, placements where siblings can live together, placements for unaccompanied children and young people, bridging to foster and therapeutic fostering. The agency also provides placements for young adults to 'stay put' with their foster carers once they reach adulthood.

At the time of this visit, the agency was suspended. Two fostering households continued to be approved by the agency but were not receiving any supervision, support or training from the service. There were no children placed with these foster carers. One fostering household was in the process of being assessed by a local authority fostering service. Clover Fostering had no role with this fostering household at the time of the visit.

The agency does not have a manager. The previous registered manager left their post on 14 April 2024.

Inspection date: 21 and 22 August 2024

Date of previous inspection: 12 March 2024

This monitoring visit

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

Ofsted carried out a monitoring visit at 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 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 agency on 7 June 2024.

At this announced visit, inspectors found that the provider has again complied with the notice of suspension.

The responsible individual continues to be the only permanent member of staff employed by the agency. He is not a qualified social worker. A new manager joined the agency on 1 July 2024. This manager resigned and left their post on 31 July 2024. The responsible individual appointed the manager despite receiving information that indicated they could not meet the requirements to be a registered manager, as set out in regulation and the national minimum standards.

The responsible individual has not carried out outstanding safer recruitment checks for his proposed staff and contractors. Despite this, the responsible individual confirmed that these people, including the quality assurance manager, agency decision-maker and independent investigators, are working on behalf of the agency. This lack of attention to the safe recruitment of staff does not reassure Ofsted that the responsible individual understands the importance of strong recruitment procedures to safeguard children and foster carers.

The responsible individual has met two of the requirements that were restated at the last inspection. He provided the financial information requested by Ofsted. He has also updated agency procedures in relation to contacting foster carers after a decision on suitability is reached. However, a further seven requirements have not been met. The responsible individual told inspectors that he has not taken any action to address a number of these outstanding matters.

There continues to be evidence that policies and procedures presented to Ofsted for this agency represent other fostering providers. For example, the new statement of purpose for the service reflects membership of a large national fostering provider. This is despite the responsible individual confirming that this agency is not part of that provider.

As a result of this significant lack of progress to meet regulatory shortfalls, seven requirements 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. When the statement of purpose is updated, ensure that a copy is sent to the chief inspector within 28 days. Additionally, ensure that the children’s guide is accessible to the children placed with the fostering agency. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 October 2024
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,	31 October 2024

carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (1) (2)(a)(b)) In particular: ensure that where concerns are raised regarding social work practice, these are managed, reported and escalated to the relevant registration bodies; 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; 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; ensure that the arrangements for the care of children reflect their individual needs, enabling children to understand decisions impacting their day-to-day lives and to independently give feedback on the care that they receive. 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 and 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, ensure that unannounced visits are used effectively 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.	31 October 2024

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 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 that is relevant to their role and to the individual needs of the children in their care. Additionally, ensure that foster carers are provided with all 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.	31 October 2024
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.	31 October 2024
The fostering service provider must not—	31 October 2024

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. 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—	31 October 2024

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; ensure that all staff receive an annual appraisal of their performance; ensure that suitable training is made available for all staff that is 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),	31 October 2024

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

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—

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) (2)(a)(b)(c) (3) (4)(a)(b)(c) (5))

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

Additionally, ensure that the fostering panel understands and acts on its responsibility in relation to overseeing the conduct of assessments carried out by the fostering service. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	
Where a person ("X") applies to become a foster parent and the fostering service provider decide to assess X's suitability to become a foster parent, any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation. Subject to paragraph (1B), the fostering service provider— must, as soon as reasonably practicable, obtain the information specified in Part 1 of Schedule 3 relating to X and other members of X's household and family. (Regulation 26 (1) (1A)(a)) In particular, ensure that Stage 1 assessment activity is only carried out after an application to foster has been received and the fostering service has made a decision to assess the applicant's suitability to become a foster parent. This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.	31 October 2024

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

Registered manager: Post vacant

Responsible individual: Salman Idrees

Inspectors

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

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