

Atrium Foster Care

Atrium Foster Care Limited

Gill House, 140 Holyhead Road, Birmingham B21 0AF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The fostering agency registered with Ofsted on 17 October 2023.

This is the agency's first inspection.

The fostering agency offers a wide range of foster care arrangements for children, including emergency care, short breaks, short- and long-term placements, parent and child placements, and 'staying put' arrangements for young adults.

At the time of this inspection, nine children were living in seven fostering households.

The registered manager is appropriately qualified and experienced.

Inspection dates: 12 to 16 August 2024

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 previously inspected

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

This new agency is led by a responsible individual and registered manager who are ambitious for children and foster parents. They have a clear vision for the future of the service, which has a strong child-centred ethos.

Foster parents say that they feel welcomed and valued by managers and staff. The assessment of potential foster parents and preparation training are thorough. This helps to ensure that foster parents understand and are committed to the ethos of the agency to provide good care to children.

Children move to live with their foster families in a planned and sensitive way. A family support worker visits all new children, and they spend time working through an age-appropriate children's guide and sharing a welcome box that has been personalised for the child. This supports foster parents and ensures that children know their rights and how to contact managers and staff if they want to talk or need help.

Children make good progress from their starting points. The areas where children need support to develop are identified along with actions to help support their progress. Children speak positively about their experiences of the care and support they receive from their foster parents as well as relationships with managers and staff.

Managers are proactive in commissioning partner agencies to provide children with good-quality wraparound support. As a result, foster parents and children are developing new skills. For example, a child with sensory needs is experiencing a wider range of activities and has learned new coping strategies that are helping her achieve better outcomes in school and social situations.

Children's progress is celebrated by managers, staff and foster parents through personalised certificates, gifts and letters. Birth children's achievements are also recognised in the same way.

Children have plenty of opportunities to express their views. Communication is adapted to ensure that the wishes and feelings of children can be gathered in keeping with their age and stage of development. All children are visited by a family support worker, are seen on a regular basis by their independent supervising social worker and have direct contact with the registered manager and responsible individual.

Managers and staff encourage children and foster parents to be actively involved in the agency. Events have included a launch party, art competitions, activity days and a summer great outdoors challenge. Children are also walking to fundraise for charity.

Children are supported to move out of their foster home in a planned way. Where there are unplanned or short-notice endings for children, detailed reports are written involving all partnership agencies to look at any lessons that can be learned and any actions that need to be taken moving forward.

Advocacy for children is a key strength of this agency. Foster carers and managers are not afraid to challenge children's placing authorities and other partnership agencies when needed. This is balanced by a good awareness of the different pace that exists between agencies, the potential for misunderstanding and the need for negotiation on occasions. An active and measured approach helps to achieve individualised care and best outcomes for children.

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

There have been no complaints, notifiable incidents or significant concerns. Managers and staff respond quickly when a risk to a child is identified and work closely with partner agencies to monitor and reduce concerns. Foster parents know their children well, and they are proactive in keeping children safe.

Foster parents and staff receive appropriate training that is informed by the agency's clear policies and procedures. This ensures that foster parents and staff know how to respond to safety concerns and that they are confident in understanding and minimising risk for children. For example, foster parents are trained in de-escalation techniques that enable them to better support children when they are upset. Foster parents are not trained to use physical intervention unless there is a need specific to an individual child. This is then closely monitored by managers and partner agencies.

Children rarely go missing from their foster homes. There have been two incidents for one child. On these occasions, the foster parent and managers responded appropriately and worked closely with partner agencies. The actions taken helped to promote and maintain the child's welfare.

When there has been a misunderstanding or difference of opinion about whether a foster parent has managed an incident or relationship with a child in line with the therapeutic aspirations of the agency, managers are quick to resolve shortfalls. This ensures that moving forward, everyone is clear about and supported to achieve the high standards set by the managers.

The fostering agency's panel advisor and panel chair ensure that assessments of prospective foster parents explore issues pertinent to fostering and include all necessary checks. Panel members prepare for panel by identifying areas of vulnerability to explore with the assessor and prospective foster parents. This provides robust consideration and recommendation of the prospective foster parent's suitability to foster.

An experienced and appropriately qualified agency decision-maker provides a clear rationale when approving foster parents. This gives further assurance that foster

parents who are recruited have the skills and resilience to care for children and keep them safe.

The recruitment of staff and panel members is thorough with clear management oversight. The recent recruitment of staff has also involved a foster parent and children as part of the recruitment panel.

There is continued monitoring of the suitability of foster parents. The agency carries out two supervision visits with foster parents per month when children first move into their new homes. After that, supervision takes place once a month. There are clear expectations that the second foster parent, birth children and foster children are seen on a regular basis. In addition, at least two unannounced visits take place per year. This provides good opportunities to ensure that foster parents' homes are safe, that foster parents provide good-quality care and that children are happy.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The responsible individual and registered manager are enthusiastic and unwavering in their determination to enhance and improve the lives of children. Together, they model the ethos and vision of the agency. There is an expectation that staff share the same commitment, which was seen in the careful recruitment of the agency's first member of staff.

Due to the effective recruitment of foster carers, the agency has reached the next stage in its development, and a second family support worker and a supervising social worker have been recruited. There has also been a recent change to the agency decision-maker, and a decision has been made to recruit two independent agency decision-makers. This will continue to ensure that there is a suitable level of staffing and independence and that detailed and reasoned decisions are made promptly.

Foster parents are supported to develop and provide good-quality care through managers communicating and sharing their vision in all aspects of the agency's work. Foster parents are happy and feel part of the agency's journey. They speak positively about fostering and the high level of support they receive from the responsible individual, registered manager and staff.

Staff and foster parents have regular supervision and meetings. Records show constant and effective challenge, direction and actions. There is a monthly focus on topics such as enjoying and achieving, health and well-being, life-story work and safeguarding, which are discussed in supervision sessions. This oversight and leadership are setting standards and raising the awareness of staff and managers about the expectations for the quality of care for children.

The responsible individual and registered manager know the strengths and weaknesses of the agency because they have effective internal and external monitoring systems in place. They have a very hands-on approach and have oversight of every aspect of the agency's operation. They are continually supporting

foster parents to develop their practice and become more resilient. They are taking considered action to embed the agency's values and ethos and to achieve sustained positive impact and outcomes for staff, foster parents and children.

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: 2738676

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Responsible individual: Emma Bello

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Inspectors

Dawn Bennett, Social Care Inspector
Nurul Kabir, Social Care Inspector

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