

Horizon Fostering Services

Horizon Fostering Services Ltd

Kingsbury House, 468 Church Lane, Kingsbury, London NW9 8UA

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a privately owned fostering agency. The agency registered with Ofsted in 2003, and the manager registered in 2022. The agency offers emergency, short-term, long-term, respite and parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 23 approved foster families providing care to 21 children.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 December 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 7 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are happy and make good progress because of the support they receive from their foster carers.

Well-thought-out matching processes mean that most children live with foster carers who share the same religion, culture or language. For asylum-seeking children, this has helped them to communicate easily with their foster carers while they learn to speak in English. One child said that this has helped them to talk openly about things that are important to them.

Children engage in decisions that affect their lives. Managers consult children to get their views about the agency, including about the activities provided to them. The agency's social workers visit foster carers' homes and speak with the children on a regular basis. These conversations include asking children about their wishes and feelings, whether they know how to complain, and whether they feel listened to and feel safe.

Children have trusting and lasting relationships with their foster carers. Some foster carers said that they have remained in touch with some of the young people they have supported in the past. Some children stay with their foster carers after they turn 18 and there are seven young people currently living with foster carers on 'staying put' agreements. This provides young people with stability, consistent care and ongoing support.

Foster carers ensure that children's health needs are met. Foster carers support children to access local health services, including GPs, dentists and opticians. Some children receive specialist care and treatment provided by hospital doctors.

Foster carers make sure that children attend school or college and make good educational progress. Managers and foster carers said that they are immensely proud about the progress children make, including those who speak English as an additional language. Some children have been able to pass their GCSEs despite having a brief time to study for these exams.

Children are supported to access a range of activities. Foster carers and children work with the agency's staff to plan fun activities for everyone. Activities that children have enjoyed with their foster carers include going out for meals, having picnics in the local park, going go-karting and cinema trips. Some children have been on holiday with their foster carers.

Foster carers support children to develop their independence at a pace that takes account of their needs and abilities. Children get help to spend time with their parents and siblings when this is safe and has been agreed with their social workers.

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

Children know who to talk to if they feel unsafe. Information in the children's guide tells them how to complain to the agency's manager. They also have information about other people they can contact if they are not happy.

Managers and staff work well with foster carers and children's social workers to ensure that any concerns about a child's safety are quickly assessed, and all agreed actions put in place. This information is available to staff and foster carers to help them to support children safely. For example, following an incident when a child managed to jump out of a window and sustained injuries, a change was made to the agency's risk assessment to include a question on window safety.

Children get help to support their emotional well-being. The agency has a therapist who supports the staff and foster carers to better understand children's needs.

There are occasions when children go missing from their foster carers' care. Managers and staff support foster carers to follow the appropriate reporting procedures so that everything necessary is done to safeguard children.

The agency's recruitment, assessment and training of foster carers is thorough to ensure that foster carers are safe to care for children. Staff carry out unannounced visits to foster carers twice a year. More visits are carried out when any concerns emerge. During these visits, children have opportunities to speak with staff without their foster carers being present.

Allegations of harm to children are shared with the appropriate agencies, investigated, and action taken to prevent recurrence. However, managers have not consistently notified Ofsted of all relevant events.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced, skilled and qualified manager manages the agency. The manager has made improvements to how the agency is run, and how staff support foster carers.

The manager has good-quality monitoring systems in place. These include regular audits that are effective at identifying shortfalls in the quality of care provided by the agency. The agency's quality reviews have improved, with the reports now providing clear and detailed information about what is happening at the agency. However, there are delays in sending in these quality reviews to the regulator.

Foster carers are supported well by their supervising social workers. Some of the foster carers said that the agency felt like a family and managers and staff are always available to support them.

Staff and foster carers receive good training and supervision. New foster carers now complete their training, support and development standards within 12 months of their initial approval.

The agency's panel remains diverse. The panel chair has plans to recruit a panel member who is care-experienced so that they can bring a distinct perspective to their discussions.

There is training and support available to panel members. The panel chair ensures that panel members get development opportunities, including gaining greater understanding of the fostering legislation.

The reviews for foster carers are now completed in a timely way. The manager was proud that they have completed all the annual reviews on time, including those that needed to be reviewed by the agency's fostering panel. There is good-quality assurance of the paperwork that is presented to the panel, and that feedback from the panel is dealt with quickly.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes places in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be confirmed in writing. (Regulation 36 (1) (2))	31 January 2025

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that there are effective procedures for monitoring the quality of the service. In particular, the registered person should ensure that reports of quality reviews are completed and sent to Ofsted in a timely way. ('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: SC034908

Registered provider: Horizon Fostering Services Ltd

Registered provider address: Kingbury House, 468 Church Lane, London NW9 8UA

Responsible individual: Shadab Ahmad

Registered manager: Jill Plummer

Telephone number: 020 8200 2355

Email address: info@horizonfostering.co.uk

Inspector

Thobekile Bandama, Social Care Inspector

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