

Community Foster Care

Community Foster Care

Unit A, Kingsholm Mews, Kingsholm Road, Gloucester GL1 3BD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This fostering agency is operated by an independent, not-for-profit charity. They provide short-term and long-term fostering services.

The registered manager has been in post since July 2021 and was present for this inspection.

Inspection dates: 20 to 24 October 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 13 June 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The practice of the staff at this agency exceeds the standard of good. This has resulted in sustained improvement to the lives of children, including those with complex and challenging needs. The staff provide therapeutic care to the children they care for. This has been achieved by ensuring that all staff and foster carers approach their individual roles from the basis of a therapeutic approach. The effective supervision of foster carers has resulted in sustained improvement to the care they provide and how they support children to make progress and achieve positive outcomes.

There is significant change and improvement in children's lives because of the total and unwavering commitment to the therapeutic model that leaders and managers have embedded. Children's progress is exceptional, as well as their aspirations for the future, considering their starting points and their previous experiences of care. All the children in the care of the agency are accessing education. Those who have remained in staying-put arrangements benefit from ongoing education or employment.

The way in which foster carers approach the care of children and understand the children they care for has been led by the way in which the agency has used research to improve practice. The innovative way that staff apply the therapeutic model to children's care is worthy of wider dissemination and is making exceptional differences in children's lives

The care and support received by foster carers enhances the children's chances to not only progress in life but heal from their previous experiences. This is achieved by a committed team around the child and foster carers. The staff work in line with their model with all external professionals.

Foster carers advise that the support they get from the staff is excellent and note that they go 'above and beyond' to not only include fostered children in the support but the wider family as well. Supervising social workers anticipate foster carers' needs and use a holistic approach to support them. Children feel happy and safe in their homes.

There is a robust response to unplanned endings. The staff gather reflections from the foster carer, the supervising social worker and any external professionals involved. There is a high level of reflection from staff, which is open and honest about where they could have done things differently. They seek to identify learning for the organisation. There is an immediate and sensitive response from managers, clinical support and work with the local authority to try and stabilise placements. Children are supported to leave placements when they are unplanned, and their well-being is fully considered.

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

The agency staff are highly proactive in planning to minimise and reduce risks to the children in their care. Robust and timely interventions are grounded in a therapeutic approach, with the ongoing support of a psychotherapist. This ensures that risks are well understood and attempts to mitigate them via understanding them are evident throughout practice.

Children are supported in line with the agency's therapeutic model when they return from being missing. Both children and carers are engaged in a process of understanding about why children go missing and how to prevent further incidents. The voice of the child is listened to by the staff to ensure that children are understood and heard. This has resulted in risks being reduced, and missing incidents are low.

The staff's approach to safeguarding is preventative. When children are experiencing risk, they ensure that they do not just react to it but seek to understand it using learning from research and an evidence-based approach. There is a strong multi-agency response at these times which is influenced by the knowledge held by agency staff, including the in-house psychotherapist.

When allegations or complaints are made against foster carers, the staff take this seriously and act swiftly in ensuring the safety of children. The staff contact the local authority designated officer, where appropriate, and ensure that they seek advice and guidance from the placing authorities of children. The staff look at themes to seek to identify any learning that can be embedded into the organisation.

Foster carers are supported through the therapeutic and trauma-informed training they receive, as well as ongoing support and guidance to effectively support children in respect of their behaviour. Foster carers work to understand children's previous lived experiences to be able to effectively care for them and safeguard them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers of this agency have wholly committed to, and achieved, a consistently high standard of practice that is therapeutic. Managers have a clear determination to succeed in order to raise the standards of the care being provided to children.

The strong influence of the leaders and managers has been extremely successful in rolling out a therapeutic model, which is now embedded throughout the organisation. It is woven into the very fabric of the agency and has been evidenced across all they do. It has raised the standards of practice for both their social workers and foster carers. Leaders and managers continue to aspire for this model to impact change for children to improve their life chances.

The way the staff approach all the work they do is innovative. Leaders and managers generate creativity for staff to sustain high-quality practice, which keeps the children at the centre of everything they do. There is extensive evidence of research being used to complement and elevate practice. Staff report being extremely happy working for the organisation; staff and new starters comment on feeling very well supported by managers.

The change in the agency's approach has caused uncertainty for some, which resulted in staff and carers deciding that working for this agency was not for them. However, in remaining so committed to their approach, leaders and managers have ensured that the high expectations remain and everyone across the agency strives for those expectations.

The therapeutic model is seen across the recruitment of foster carers and staff in all roles within the agency, and how foster carers and staff are supervised and trained.

The registered manager has complete oversight of the agency. Oversight is seen at all levels across all practice. Senior leadership have a clear strategy that ensures the oversight of the agency is robust and considered. They are clear on the roles of their trustees. There is clearly defined governance of the organisation. Everything they do is grounded in the need to strive for best outcomes for children.

Case records reflect children's lives and the work carried out well. There is clear recording of children's achievements, and all plans focus on their futures. The voice of the child is consistently documented. Matching children to new carers is thoughtful and planned.

The staff, in line with their model, have started to use a therapeutic fostering assessment. Not only does this fall in line with the agency's ethos, but it clearly defines and sets out the way in which they want their perspective foster carers to work. The way in which the assessment is completed involves the carers to take joint ownership and to be fully engaged with the process. The quality of these assessments ensure the decision makers can understand what the perspective foster carers can offer and any gaps in knowledge.

The staff have respectful and functioning relationships with their panel chair, agency decision-maker and independent reviewing officer. Their individual roles promote safe, secure and stable placements. There is a rigorous quality assurance function in place. It is evident how well they feel they can professionally challenge each other and the agency when needed.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that prior to the placement of each child, the foster carer is provided with all the information held by the fostering service that they need to carry out their role effectively. The information should be provided in a clear, comprehensive written form and include the support that will be available to the foster carer.

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: SC035415

Registered provider: Community Foster Care

Registered provider address: Unit A, Kingsholm Mews, Kingsholm Road,
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Inspectors

Hannah Spencer-Townsend, Social Care Inspector
Helen Cushnie, Social Care Inspector

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