

Ethelbert Fostering Services

Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Ethelbert Fostering Service is a privately owned independent fostering agency based in Ramsgate, Kent. The service is part of Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited, a company that also owns and manages several registered children's homes, a contact centre and a school. Therapeutic services can be commissioned when this is identified as a particular need.

The service provides emergency, short-, medium-, and long-term foster placements for children. At the time of this inspection, 28 fostering households were approved, with 42 children placed.

The current manager has submitted an application to register with Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 28 October to 1 November 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: 27 September 2021

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 make good progress with foster carers who offer warmth and nurture. Foster carers know the individual needs of the children that they care for. They provide good-quality care and are relentless in striving to meet children's individual needs. Foster carers talk about the agency feeling like a big family and say that this is why they stay. This helps to provide children with continuity of care.

Children build trusted and secure relationships with their carers and agency staff, including specialist staff such as the health promotion specialist and the education champion. These specialist staff are a particular strength of the agency. They are effective in delivering support that helps to meet children's needs and build their confidence.

The education champion helps to support and promote children's education. As a result, children's aspirations grow. One child is planning to go to university next year and another child has increased their school attendance from minimal to 100%.

Agency social workers provide foster carers with regular good-quality supervision. They see the children and spend dedicated time with them. This allows children time and space to express their views, in the knowledge that they will be heard. Foster carers value these supervisions.

Foster carers receive a good range of training that helps them to meet the needs of the children that they care for. The introduction of therapeutic parenting training has been well received by carers, and they have begun to put this into practice. For example, one carer was able to apply what they had learned to manage a child's complex behaviours. As a result, this child is now more settled and making better progress in their life.

The agency staff support children to express their views, for example, through their child in care reviews, as well as the carer household reviews. The active children's council means that children's views have an impact on the development of the service. For example, the children's council has recently devised questions for prospective carers and been involved in the interview process for new staff.

Foster carers and agency staff encourage extra-curricular activities that help children to develop. For example, children are supported to enjoy Scouts, swimming lessons, cookery and dance. The service also offers a range of activities that help the children to get to know each other and have fun. The annual summer barbecue is well received, as was the recent Halloween trail.

The service matches children with their foster carers well. The referrals officer effectively involves carers in the matching process. As a result, children feel part of the family and have their needs well met. Children remain with their foster carers

and experience security and stability. One child said, 'Moving here was refreshing. I am treated equally and with respect.'

Children can meet the carer and their family before they move in. They receive welcome boxes with items related to their likes and needs. The agency is supportive of children staying with their foster families after they reach 18. Strengthening children's transition to independence forms part of the agency's workforce development plan.

An effective panel is in place. Panel members work together to ensure a high level of oversight and scrutiny of applications. Newly approved foster carers were positive about the assessment process and their experience of panel. The experienced agency decision-maker ensures the approval of suitable foster carers only.

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

Good safeguarding arrangements are in place. Staff and foster carers know what to do when they have concerns about the welfare of a child. Managers ensure that there are good relationships with the local authority designated officers.

Staff and carers have a good understanding of risk management. They work to ensure the safety of children. Staff update the comprehensive risk assessments as required. Staff and carers work together as a team when there is an incident. This is evident in the way that they manage incidents when children self-harm. There is a sense of calm and confidence because of the good use of the expertise of agency staff and clear guidance on how to respond.

Incidents of children going missing are rare and short-lived. Foster carers know how to respond, and manage such situations well.

Carers receive training in understanding child sexual exploitation and self-harm. Specialist training provided to carers prepares them to manage complex behaviours and circumstances. De-escalation and conflict management training help carers to manage challenging situations. Therapeutic parenting training helps carers to understand the impact of early childhood trauma and prepares them for behaviours that children might display as a result. Children speak positively about boundaries that are in place. They say that they feel safe. One child said, 'The rules are fair...the boundaries are not too bad.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager has been in post since 7 May 2024. He has submitted his application to Ofsted to register as manager.

The management team is ambitious for the children. Children's achievements are regularly recognised and celebrated. Managers support staff to develop their interests and talents. They use these to help develop the service as well as enhance the experiences of carers and children.

The manager has a good understanding of the progress that the children make. He ensures that foster carers receive good-quality support from the service to enable children to make progress.

The overview of the independent reviewing officer and annual presentation of carers to panel provides further scrutiny of foster carers' development.

The manager ensures there is a strong supportive environment for his team. As a result, staff are positive about working at this agency. Staff receive regular reflective supervision, good-quality training, and support. A good induction process is in place that helps to build on new staff's skills and knowledge. Annual staff appraisals and performance development plans are used effectively to ensure staff maintain expected standards.

The manager ensures good professional relationships are maintained which help to promote the best possible support to children. The work done with placing authorities and carers during civil disturbances last summer showed strong commitment to ensuring the safety of the children in their care.

Leaders and managers recognise the strengths of the agency and areas for development. They are responsive and work to make improvements. For example, they have undertaken work to encourage staff and carers to use language that cares when writing records. However, key documents were missing from some children's case files.

Leaders and managers promote equality, diversity and inclusion. The health promotion specialist works with carers and children around gender, sexual orientation and sexual health. Carers providing care for a child of a different ethnicity to their own receive training to meet the child's needs.

The requirement and recommendation set at the last inspection have been met.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that the foster carer is given a copy of the child's placement plan and any other relevant documentation as soon as this is provided to them by the responsible authority. If provision of the care plan and any other documents by the responsible authority is delayed, the fostering service should make robust representations to relevant officers in the placing authority to ensure these documents are received. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 31.2)

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: SC036583

Registered provider: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited

Registered provider address: Ethelbert Specialist Homes Limited, 17 Leigh Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT12 5EU

Responsible individual: Leslie Davenport

Registered manager: Post vacant

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Inspector

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector

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