

Capstone Foster Care (South East) Limited

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Boardman House, 64 Broadway, London E15 1NT

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The fostering agency first registered with Ofsted in June 2003. The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2020.

The fostering agency provides the following foster care placements to children: emergency placements, respite and bridging, short-term and long-term placements, and parent and child placements. A number of children now living in foster care are unaccompanied minors and/or seeking asylum.

At the time of the inspection, the agency had 67 approved foster families, and the fostering agency was providing placements for 69 children. Four children were spoken with during the inspection, while three other children shared their views with inspectors through video messages.

Inspection dates: 14 to 18 October 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 **outstanding**

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

Date of last inspection: 13 December 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

The fostering agency provides good-quality care, and children thrive while living with their foster families. Children feel loved and listened to. They develop secure attachments with their foster families and have a strong sense of belonging.

The agency's children's champions work directly with children and support them to have a voice in the agency. Children have an influence in shaping the fostering agency's services. For example, the work of the children's youth group means that children decide which events and activities they wish the agency to provide for them.

Children receive care that is tailored to meet their individual needs. The matching process is effective in matching children with foster carers who provide them with high-quality care. This is also the case for families in parent and child placements.

Children's identity needs are well met by the agency. For example, children's guides are available in various languages, with one guide geared specifically for children seeking asylum.

Children can practise their faith as they wish, and foster carers are skilled in communicating effectively with children who are nonverbal. The agency meets the needs of children who are new to the UK. Staff and foster carers work sensitively with children who are exploring their gender identity.

Children's learning outcomes and general development are good. School and college attendance is high, and children make good progress from their starting points. Foster carers and staff are aspirational about meeting children's learning needs and make sure that children's achievements are celebrated.

Children live healthy lifestyles. Foster carers and staff ensure that they promote children's physical, emotional and social well-being. Children have good access to primary healthcare services and receive advice and support from specialist services.

Staff, foster families and children can access the agency's team of therapists, who provide sessions and offer training and insight into a trauma-informed approach to care. The agency's clinicians are an integral feature in supporting staff and foster families to address issues that arise for children.

Older children can remain with their carers into adulthood in 'staying put' arrangements. This provides them with ongoing stability into adulthood. The children's champions work with older children on a five-week programme to help

develop their independence and prepare them for adulthood. Some of these activities include learning to sew, working on CVs and role playing job interviews.

Foster carers receive exceptional support to ensure that children's needs are met. Children make good progress and have positive experiences. This view is supported by feedback received from children themselves, local authority staff and some parents.

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

Children can identify a trusted adult who they can talk to about any concerns, and they report that they feel safe. Staff and foster carers regularly explore safeguarding matters at supervisory home visits, and both parties receive training about protecting children and keeping children safe.

Children work with their foster families and staff to help keep themselves safe. This is a key role of the children's champions. For example, children have discussions and receive information about internet safety, and recently, children have engaged in sessions run by the police that have been focused on their rights and staying safe while in the community.

Critical incidents such as offending behaviour, child sexual exploitation, gang affiliation, radicalisation, misuse of substances and missing from care do not frequently happen. When these do occur, foster carers and children receive support and advice about how to reduce risks. For example, staff worked effectively with a child and relevant professionals to address the extremist views held by the child. This supported the child's understanding of the potential risk of radicalisation.

The recruitment, assessment, preparation and support of foster carers have a focus on keeping children safe. Managers and leaders monitor, reflect and report on all safeguarding concerns. The management of complaints and allegations against foster carers is robust and fair, and it has children's welfare at the centre of all investigations.

All children's records have risk assessments and safe care plans that address children's specific safety needs. Risk assessments are clear about identified risks and how risks are to be reduced. Risk assessments and safe care plans are regularly updated.

Foster carers receive training in managing incidents when children are missing from care. Foster carers largely adhere to local protocols and understand what action to take when children are missing. However, some foster carers do not always promptly share safeguarding concerns with the agency, and at times, there are delays in sharing pertinent information with staff and other professionals.

Foster carers set clear and consistent boundaries for children, which promotes children's positive behaviour. Foster carers largely use effective strategies to help manage children's complex behaviour and promote appropriate behaviour. There

have been two incidents when foster carers have restrained children. The fostering agency does not routinely provide foster carers with core training focused on managing difficult behaviours. In some cases, foster carers have not completed this training, even though, at the point of the referral being made, the management of children's complex emotions is known.

The fostering agency's recruitment and vetting of staff and panel members are robust and in accordance with safe recruitment practices. This ensures that staff are suitable to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The leadership and management of the fostering service are strong. Leaders are ambitious for change and strive for continual improvement. The agency's management oversight is effective. The registered manager and senior members of staff have developed a series of highly successful monitoring systems that consistently review the quality of care provided to children. Recently, this has included the review and amendment of a range of key recording templates.

The governance of the agency is sound. Senior and quality assurance managers complete file audits to monitor and improve the quality of staff's recording. As a result, the standard of staff's records has improved. Case records are clear, well considered, detailed and relevant.

Managers keenly track children's progress and are in the process of developing new systems to improve their review. The stability of children's placement is routinely explored and discussed by managers, who offer staff guidance on the action to take if children's progress is not as expected. Managers can demonstrate the positive impact the service has on children's lives.

The management team is highly visible to stakeholders. This includes children and foster carers, whom the team meets periodically for consultation and ideas of how to further improve the service. Staff of the agency, local authority staff and other professionals have similar opportunities. 'Meet the Managers' meetings are designated forums for foster carers to meet with senior staff, while the managers' presence at activities, trips and celebrations encourages children and their families to share their views. The agency's youth representatives also have good opportunities to meet and speak with managers.

Managers are ambitious for children and strive to promote children's progress and positive experiences. Managers complete annual quality of care reports to help evaluate service trends and developments. This is to help promote children's achievements. In addition, senior managers have devised a wide-ranging and ambitious development plan to help drive improvement.

A suitably experienced and qualified registered manager effectively and efficiently manages the agency. Staff comment that the registered manager is confident,

motivated and inspirational in her approach to meeting the needs of children and that her leadership is strong.

Staff receive regular and effective supervision, and appraisals take place each year. Staff consistently say that they feel very well supported by the entire management team members, who genuinely care not only for children and foster carers but also for their well-being. Several members of staff have worked for the agency for many years; some have left the agency, only to return later. Foster carers are appreciative of some staff's longevity with the agency, which offers them a sense of stability and continuity.

The support, supervision and training of foster carers are excellent. Training and development activities are wide-ranging and often bespoke in addressing the needs of children. For example, foster carers who care for disabled children or those with complex health needs receive specialist training to ensure that they safely meet the needs of their children. Foster carers who provide parent and child placements also receive specialist training. Extensive therapeutic training is available to foster carers and staff to support the agency's therapeutic and trauma-informed approach to care.

The fostering panel promotes safe and secure placements. The panel functions effectively, and the process is orderly and democratic. Its administration is well organised. Panel members have the required experience and expertise in most fields. However, the central list does not include a member with expertise in physical health. Membership of the panel is not as diverse as it could be. Currently, the panel chair is the only male panel member.

Children benefit from the close partnership working between their foster carers, staff of the fostering service and other professionals. Communication between the parties is consistent and effective. This supports the coordination of children's care and their safe, positive experiences and progress.

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, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that child protection policies are effectively implemented so that foster parents understand the action they must take when safeguarding issues arise. Ensure that foster carers promptly inform the fostering agency and other professionals of any concerns and safeguarding incidents without delay.	30 November 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted in all fostering placements. In particular, ensure that managers negotiate with clinicians their early intervention with children and foster families to promote placement stability. In addition, foster carers should receive training in managing difficult behaviour where this is suspected to be a feature of the placement. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the number, skills, knowledge and experience of persons on the central list are sufficient. The registered person should consider recruiting a panel member who has expertise in physical health. They should also consider recruiting additional male panel members. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.8)

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: SC038134

Registered provider: Capstone Foster Care (South East) Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 2, Greenbox, Westonhall Road, Stoke Prior,
Worcestershire B60 4AL

Responsible individual: Debbie Tomlinson

Registered manager: Sandeep Massey

Telephone number: 02033973332

Email address: debbie.tomlinson@capstonefostercare.co.uk

Inspectors

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Angela Reid, Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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