

Barnardo's Fostering South East

Barnardo's

Barnardo's House, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency provides short breaks, parent and child, emergency short- and long-term placements for children and young people who are referred by local authorities.

At the time of the inspection, the agency supports 18 fostering households, which are caring for 10 children and young people. Foster carers also continue to support three young adults over the age of 18 through staying-put arrangements.

The social work qualified and experienced manager is currently studying for her management qualification. The manager registered with Ofsted on 8 July 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 17 November 2020 to carry out an assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 7 to 11 February 2022

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: 13 May 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: requires improvement to be good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The agency has successfully recruited foster carers from a variety of backgrounds to meet the needs of the children. The children are well matched with their foster carers. Any additional support needs are identified and addressed. As a result, most children grow and develop in families where there is a clear sense of permanence and stability. The agency is working with adoption partners to discuss fostering to adopt with some applicants. This potentially provides more opportunities for children to enjoy early permanence.

The children grow and develop as valued members of the fostering family with a sense of belonging. One child said, 'My foster carer is an inspiration and a role model.' The attachments developed between the children and their foster families mean that the majority of children, who have turned 18 in the past three years, have continued to live with their foster carers into adulthood. Some continue to receive support long after they have grown up and left home. One young adult said, 'My foster carer changed me in a way that I am so proud of myself. She is like a mother figure, and I honestly appreciate her so much.'

The foster carers understand the importance of promoting the lifelong bonds between children and their birth families. They effectively facilitate communication and meetings with family to ensure that those bonds remain and that fractured relationships, where possible, are repaired.

The foster carers are child-focused and provide good levels of support and guidance to the children. This helps the children to be healthy, safer, and to follow their goals. The children enjoy the experiences and milestones of their peers such as joining clubs, going on holiday, having sleepovers, getting a part-time job and learning to drive.

The agency provides effective support to children, such as therapeutic and practical support when needed. The life-story work completed with some children has helped them have a better understanding of their personal histories and why they are living apart from family members.

The agency has helped the carers to rise to the challenge of supporting the children through the pandemic. Regular newsletters and virtual coffee mornings have ensured that carers do not feel isolated. Some carers spoke about how the 'Barnardo's Link' therapeutic service and educational support had helped them to assist the children with home education and promote positive emotional well-being.

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

The children are able to talk to their foster carers about things which concern them. One child reflected on how this has helped them to become safer. The child said, 'She [the foster carer] knows a way to put me back in my place when I am doing

something really dumb.' A parent told the inspector that their child 'is in the best place that she can be'.

The agency staff and foster carers understand their pivotal role in ensuring that children are kept safe. The children, wherever possible, live with carers who have successfully supported children in the past who have been at similar risk. Foster carers have access to appropriate training. Newer carers are supported by those who are more experienced in working with particular risks. The foster carers are proud of the children's personal growth and increased personal safety. One foster carer reported that their foster child has amazed them and that the child has really turned her life around.

The foster carers and agency staff take effective action to identify and minimise risk. The children's individual risk assessments are detailed and kept up to date with any emerging concerns. The agency alerts partner professionals to safeguarding risks.

The foster carers understand the actions they should take when a child goes missing from home. However, on occasion, missing-from-home records lack clarity in respect of when the child returned and the actions taken by the carer. Furthermore, the agency does not have a system for requesting the child's responsible authority conduct a return home interview each time a child has been missing. Consequently, opportunities to understand patterns, trends and aspects of risk are potentially missed.

The agency undertakes internal safeguarding reviews when any concern relating to the care of a child is raised. A report of each review is presented to panel. This has enabled the agency to better identify any patterns and trends that have the potential to impact on the longer-term suitability of foster carers. These additional levels of transparent review help ensure that any concerns are fully scrutinised. Foster carers are well supported through this process.

Staff recruitment procedures on occasion lack attention to detail. Applicants' full employment history is not scrutinised to identify and explore gaps in employment. Therefore, information that has a bearing on suitability may be missed.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

This is a fostering agency which has gone through a lot of changes in the past two years. There has been a loss of some staff and carers, and the appointment of both a new manager and responsible individual since the last full inspection. The new senior managers have driven improvements within the service. They have successfully overseen an organisational culture change of increased monitoring, challenge and accountability.

The agency panel is effective. Panel members are clear on the roles and responsibilities of panel. The agency panel minutes clearly detail panel recommendations regarding foster carers' suitability and parenting capacity. The panel chair and agency decision-maker effectively 'gate keep' the assessment

process to ensure that only suitable foster carers with a clear motivation to support children are approved.

The agency provides new foster carers with post-approval induction and training, which builds on their initial preparation training. Foster carers are also linked with more experienced carers who help them to build confidence and navigate any challenges.

The agency statement of purpose is not clear, accurate and up to date. The statement of purpose has not been sent to Ofsted in the past four years. Ofsted as the regulator, therefore, has not been kept apprised of the changes made to this pivotal document.

On occasion, record-keeping lacks attention to detail. Some documents such as delegated authority permissions and risk assessments are undated, unsigned or contain inaccurate information.

The Children's Guides to the agency are engaging, accessible and useful documents. They are available in different age-targeted formats, symbol format and can be translated into other languages as needed. These guides explain to children what fostering is and outline what they can expect from the agency. However, some important information about how they can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director or Ofsted is missing.

Foster carers say they feel well supported by the agency. Some carers have a long-term family connection and the Barnardo's brand is something for which they feel great loyalty. One foster carer said, 'I feel like Barnardo's is my second family.'

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— keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and children's guide, notify the Chief Inspector of any such revision within 28 days. (Regulation 4 (a)(b))	1 April 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that written records kept by the fostering service when a child goes missing detail the action taken by foster carers, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the foster home and any action taken in the light of those reasons. The provider should request the responsible authority conduct a return home interview on each occasion a child goes missing. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 5.10)
- The registered person should ensure that the Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 16.4)
- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service can demonstrate, including from written records, that it consistently follows good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in foster carer selection and staff and panel member recruitment. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 19.2)
- The registered person should ensure that staff, volunteers, panel members and fostering households understand the nature of records maintained and follow the service's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information and access to files (including files removed from the premises). There should be a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record

keeping and take action when needed. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.2)

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: SC043552

Registered provider: Barnardo's

Registered provider address: Barnardo's, Tanners Lane, Barkingside, Ilford IG6 1QG

Responsible individual: Charanjit Kang

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Inspector

Joanna Heller, Social Care Inspector

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