

Jay Fostering

Jay Fostering Limited

Jay Fostering Ltd, Unit I, Edward House, Grange Business Park, Enderby Road,
Whetstone, Leicester LE8 6EP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Jay Fostering is an independent fostering agency based in Leicestershire. It is a stand-alone company but is part of the National Fostering Group. The agency provides a wide range of fostering placements, including emergency, short-term, long-term, bridging and parent and child placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 174 children placed in 114 fostering households.

The registered manager has been registered since February 2014.

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.

Inspection dates: 1 to 5 November 2021

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: 3 July 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most children experience settled, secure placements with carers. This agency has a good record of being able to care for siblings together and of supporting these placements.

Practice is underpinned by a therapeutic parenting approach which is well embedded. Carers provide nurturing care to meet children's physical and emotional needs.

Children are building positive relationships with carers. One child said: 'I would mark [foster carer] a thousand out of ten. I love living here.'

One child is settled in his foster family, after experiencing a number of changes. He is attending school, making friends and was invited to his first birthday party recently.

New carers have a detailed induction programme, their 'road map' to becoming an experienced carer. They have an experienced carer 'buddy' and have access to support from 'helping hands' carers if they require additional support at any time.

As a result of feedback regarding too much information and too many updates of the foster carers' handbook, the administrative team designed 'Bitesize'. This is a succinct version of all essential information that can be more easily updated. Carers also receive monthly bulletins to communicate good news, achievements and initiatives to support carers and their families. Carers say that the staff keep in touch and keep them up to date.

There are lead practitioners for participation within the team and a thriving children and young people's council, which they have named 'Shooting Stars'. There is meaningful consultation with children, and the team listens and acts on their views. Another popular resource for the children is participating in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. There are a number of staff trained in leading the scheme.

There is a good record of attendance, participation and progress in education for most children. Carers and school staff share information to support children's progress. Social workers have access to advice from an education lead in the wider organisation, to support problem-solving and advocate for children where there are barriers to identifying an appropriate education placement.

One child had a very out-of-date education plan; staff had not communicated with the responsible local authority effectively. This impairs how well the carer can support this child with learning at home. For another child, neither they nor the carer had a copy of their pathway plan. This means that the carer cannot support or assess the child's progress or assess their readiness for their next steps.

Children's health needs are being identified and met, and as a result there are improving health outcomes for children. Some carers struggle with where to record health information updates in the agency's database. This is an area where practice can be strengthened to improve the monitoring of children's healthcare needs.

Carers and social workers promote and support children to have family time with family members. They recognise the importance of children maintaining relationships, where it is agreed in their care plan.

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

Managers and social workers report safeguarding incidents appropriately, to Ofsted, local authorities and other relevant agencies.

Designated officers report that managers refer, seek and respond to advice in a timely way.

A number of risk assessments were reviewed during the inspection, and some did not provide a clear measure of risk or useful advice to carers. A small sample of records included stigmatising and blaming language.

There have been a small number of unplanned placement endings, and incidents of carers serving notice to local authorities. Managers convene stability meetings to identify where support is needed and to prevent unplanned placement endings. They also convene disruption meetings to learn lessons.

In one case, carers should have received support in a timelier way. Their experience of accepting an emergency placement with very limited information had a profound impact on their confidence in their skills and their trust in the agency and local authority.

Lessons have been learned about gathering information from placing local authorities at the referral stage. There have also been lessons learned about matching children's needs to the carer's experience and skills. Agency reviews of placement endings do not start with consideration of the impact on each individual child; they are not sufficiently child centred.

The wider organisation has implemented a national referral service, with regional teams. The team manager for the Midlands area has ensured that the team consults effectively with all stakeholders and partners. Supervising social workers and carers report that the regional referral team is working well. They have, when necessary, convened meetings with the child's professional network to ensure all known information and assessment of need is shared.

A concern about a carer and a potential abuse of position of trust was reviewed and identified poor practice by carers and staff. The concern was referred to the designated officer. There was a detailed chronology that included carer's non-compliance with the agency's recording and reporting policies and failure to

complete essential training. The carer resigned from the agency. The manager did not refer to the panel for advice and consideration as to whether there were grounds for deregistration. However, the manager did report the concerns to the Disclosure and Barring Service. Managers are reviewing this information, along with the practice oversight in this case, to assess the need for any further action.

Unannounced visits to carers take place appropriately and these visits are well planned. There is a comprehensive health and safety checklist to support carers and supervising social workers to assess and ensure compliance with health and safety regulations, advice and guidance.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The manager is experienced and is held in high regard by the team and by stakeholders. Staff are very positive about their access to managers and support. The management team was open and receptive throughout the inspection.

The registered manager is ambitious for the children placed with the agency, for the service and for staff. Staff have opportunities for training and professional development. Team managers, and the office manager, are undertaking management training.

Since the previous inspection, managers have appointed to a senior practitioner role. They have expanded the support worker team and are in the process of developing a team of sessional workers, who are experienced in fostering. These developments are for carers who may require additional support at times.

There has been some impact on the recruitment of carers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has also contributed to some carers deciding to resign.

Carers, staff and stakeholders reported that the management team showed effective leadership and were sensitive to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, foster carers, their families and staff. There were some good examples of activities being organised, and treats being sent to children and carers who were having to isolate. Social workers have maintained contact with carers during this time.

Commissioners shared positive feedback about effective communication with the agency. Commissioners were positive about timely responses to requests for placements and the stability of children's placements generally.

A small number of carers are not meeting training expectations. Social workers have been sympathetic due to the impact of COVID-19 and changes to the way training has been, and is being, delivered. There has been some reliance on online training and the agency has also introduced a new training hub. Staff have listened to carers' feedback and classroom-style face-to-face training is being delivered again. There are also opportunities for carers to be supported in situations where there are barriers to online learning.

Managers and staff have not always highlighted the importance of safeguarding and safer caring training with carers. The reasons carers give for not undertaking training, and what actions are required to address this, are not always clear in carer's supervision records and annual reviews.

The use of the reward element of carer fees, in line with ability and experience, is not promoting good standards of care effectively, for example in meeting training and recording expectations.

The fostering panel functions very well. The chair and agency decision-maker are experienced and conscientious, and they drive the development of the panel. Both are complimentary about the administration of the panel and the work of the panel adviser.

The panel is representative and meets regulations. Panel members are child centred, seeking and responding to children's feedback. However, managers have not always used the panel for independent advice when there are concerns about a carer's suitability, and/or following unplanned placement endings.

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 provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside of office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))	10 January 2022
The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 18 (4))	10 January 2022
The fostering service provider must maintain and keep up to date the records specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 22 (1)) This includes a record in the form of a register, showing in respect of each child placed with foster parents – the date on which the child ceased to be placed there and the child's address on leaving the placement.	10 January 2022
The fostering panel must also— give advice, and make recommendations, on such other matters or cases as the fostering service provider may refer to it. (Regulation 25 (4) (c))	10 January 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers actively safeguard and promote the welfare of foster children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.2)

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers have up-to-date information about each child's educational progress. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 8.7)
- The registered person should ensure that foster carers contribute to the development of each child's care plan, in collaboration with the child, including the pathway plan for an 'eligible' child and work collaboratively with the child's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 12.2)
- The registered person should ensure that supervision meetings with foster carers have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 21.8)
- The registered person should ensure that entries in records, decisions and reasons for them, are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third-party information and are signed and dated. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.5)

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: SC053859

Registered provider: Jay Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: John Keane

Registered manager: Deborah Saysell

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Email address: enquiries@jayfostering.com

Inspectors

Cathey Moriarty, Social Care Inspector
Tracy Murty, Social Care Inspector

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