

Acorn Fostering Services Limited

80 Burleys Way, Leicester LE1 3BD

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency is privately owned and is based in Leicester. The agency undertakes the assessment, approval and supervision of foster carers. The agency provides a wide range of placements for children and young people, including short-term, long-term, parent and child and emergency placements. At the time of this inspection, the agency had 24 approved fostering households providing placements for 30 children and young people.

There is no registered manager. A new manager has recently been appointed and has applied to register with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 18 June 2024

Date of previous inspection: 29 April 2024

This monitoring visit

This monitoring visit was carried out following a full inspection at which the agency was judged to be inadequate. Subsequently, compliance notices were issued under regulations 8 and 11.

The manager and responsible individual have made significant progress in assessing the skills of staff. They undertook a thorough review of staff skills and knowledge. Steps are now being taken to support supervising social workers to improve their practice. Where performance is not to a required level, action is being taken to address this.

The quality of staff supervision is improving. The manager completes case audits before supervision which help structure these sessions. All cases have recorded management oversight. Training and development needs are reflected on and timescales are set for actions to be completed.

Managers and independent social workers undertake case file audits. This work has revealed patterns of concerns in supervising social worker practice. These concerns relate to an over-reliance on self-reported information from foster carers, a failure to record, report and escalate concerns appropriately and a lack of professional curiosity. These themes have been analysed and there has been some positive work undertaken with practitioners to reduce levels of risk going forward. All concerns have been reported to wider safeguarding professionals.

The manager has implemented tools so that communication with children can be better recorded and considered by the professionals involved with these children. Important documents that are used to capture children's views have been further adapted to ensure that care planning for children can be better understood and supported.

Managers and the responsible individual have engaged well with foster carers. Foster carers have been positive about the new approaches that are being introduced.

There is a recognition from the fostering agency that management oversight was poor before the newly recruited manager started work with the agency. The new manager and responsible individual have acknowledged that there was a degree of complacency and that this style of management cannot continue. Steps have been taken to put in place firmer expectations to staff and foster carers about what safe practice needs to look like going forward.

This monitoring visit focused solely on the compliance notices and not the statutory requirements. Ofsted is satisfied that both compliance notices have been met.

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

Requirement	Due date
The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to— the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency, carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill. (Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b))	20 August 2024
The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times, and before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child's— wishes and feelings (having regard to the child's age and understanding), and religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background. (Regulation 11(a)) This requirement was raised at the last two inspections.	20 August 2024
The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that— no child placed with a foster parent is subject to any measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable. (Regulation 13 (2(b)) In particular, ensure that consequences are proportionate and child-centred.	20 August 2024

The fostering service provider must promote the health and development of children placed with foster parents. In particular the fostering service provider must ensure that each child is provided with such individual support, aids and equipment which the child may require as a result of any particular health needs or disability the child may have. (Regulation 15 (1) (2)(b)(c)(d)) In particular, ensure that foster carers are aware of, and are supported to meet, children's individual health needs. Where children's health needs are not being met, the fostering agency must advocate on a child's behalf. Policy guidance for children in receipt of disability benefits must be devised and implemented. This requirement is repeated from the last inspection.	20 August 2024
The fostering service provider must promote the educational achievement of children placed with foster parents. In particular, the fostering service provider must— promote the regular school attendance and participation in school activities of children of compulsory school age placed with foster parents. (Regulation 16 (1) (2)(b))	20 August 2024
The fostering service provider must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them. (Regulation 17 (1))	20 August 2024
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 21 (4)(a)) This is a repeated requirement from the last inspection.	20 August 2024
The fostering service provider must review the approval of each foster parent in accordance with this regulation. (Regulation 28 (1)) In particular, ensure that foster carers have a written fostering agreement on file. This is a repeated requirement from the last inspection.	20 August 2024

The registered person must maintain a system for— monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b)) In particular, ensure that the registered manager has effective, up-to-date monitoring systems in place to support his oversight of the quality and activity of the fostering service. This requirement has been raised twice previously.	20 August 2024
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Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC060131

Registered provider: Acorn Fostering Services Limited

Registered provider address: ASRA Conference Centre, 80 Burleys Way,
Leicester, Leicestershire LE1 3BD

Responsible individual: Shadab Ahmad

Inspector

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector

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