

Time Out Fostering

Time Out Fostering Limited

Unit 17, Oaklands Business Park 64-68, Elm Grove, Worthing BN11 5LH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Time Out Fostering is a limited company with 35 fostering households caring for 43 children. The agency offers a range of services for children between the ages of 0 and 18. This includes short- and long-term placements, emergency, bridging, sibling assessment, asylum seeker and respite placements. Additionally, the agency specialises in working with parent and child placements.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 December 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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The independent fostering agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 1 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

The shortfalls found in help and protection and leadership and management have affected children's progress and experiences. Despite the identified shortfalls, most children do make some progress.

Monitoring by leaders and managers has been poor. This has resulted in a failure to identify themes or patterns relating to carer logs, including what this means for children's experiences. There is a lack of clarity in how children are doing and a possible impact on children of not having a clear record of their time in foster care.

Suitable arrangements are in place for meeting children's identity and cultural needs. This includes having experienced carers to support emergency placements for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Documents are translated into children's first language and interpreters are provided as needed. However, the standards of care for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children sometimes differ from those expected for non-asylum-seeking children. This was most evident in the expectations for one child who was vulnerable to criminal exploitation and radicalisation.

Foster carers ensure that they meet children's health needs. They register children with local health providers and make routine appointments for children. They advocate for the specialist support or assessments that children need. They also ensure that children know their rights in relation to their healthcare.

The manager ensures that a suitable matching process is in place. Agency staff consider the foster carer's skills and experience as well as the needs of the child. When children say that they wish to move, the agency staff facilitate this as appropriate. This includes a plan to support children's wishes.

The children speak positively about their experiences of living with their foster carers. They said they feel happy and cared for. They feel listened to and have someone they can express any worries to. External professionals gave positive feedback about the fostering service.

The agency staff arrange events for the children to come together, such as a Christmas party and days out. Events are open to foster carers and their families. The events are well attended and create a feeling of togetherness.

An effective foster carer recruitment process is in place. Prospective foster carers receive appropriate training to prepare them for fostering. The agency involves birth children and fostered children in the interviews of prospective carers. An effective panel ensures that only safe applicants are recommended for approval as foster carers. Strong processes are in place that provides good oversight of the recruitment process.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Senior leaders do not always appropriately escalate concerns for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children when the response from their local authority is insufficient. One foster carer raised significant safeguarding concerns indicating exploitation. The child's whereabouts were often unknown to the foster carer. Agency staff failed to show professional curiosity and appropriately explore matters to ensure the child's safety. Furthermore, staff did not update risk plans to reflect the changes in the child's behaviour or the indicators of exploitation or radicalisation.

Some carers use CCTV to safeguard children. However, on occasion, this is also used to track children's behaviour. In one case, the use of CCTV was not proportionate. There was no evidence of consent on file from social workers or children and there had been no review of its usefulness. Additionally, in some cases, there was no information on file about the storage and management of the information gathered.

The manager has ensured that processes to ensure staff and carers are safely recruited are in place. However, the manager has not ensured that Disclosure and Barring Service checks for all foster carers are updated in accordance with the agency's policy for renewal.

Some staff understand how to manage risk. Risk assessments and safer care plans are in place. However, these plans are not always updated following changes in children's risks. Consequently, those supporting foster carers and children may not have a current understanding of risks.

The service sensitively manages any allegations against carers. Leaders and managers are aware of the impact allegations can have on families. When possible, they work with them and all relevant parties to come to a resolution. The manager supported one foster carer to raise a complaint to the local authority following a lack of transparency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that good monitoring processes are in place. As a result, there are significant and widespread shortfalls in the service. These include poor records of foster carer supervision. Some supervisions are many months out of date and the quality of some foster carer supervisions is poor. The records of foster carers' supervisions do not provide a good overview of the fostering household. Some carers' daily logs have not been uploaded to the electronic recording system for several years. Consequently, staff and social workers cannot access current information about the children or their experiences in the foster home. Children will therefore be unable to access information about their experiences should they wish to do so in the future.

Many children's files do not contain essential and appropriate documentation. For example, files do not have statutory documents, such as pathway and placement plans, to inform children's care planning. While there is a process for chasing up these documents, it is not effective. The manager's role in this process is unclear. As a result, the local authority documents is chased for months with limited success.

Leaders and managers do not have good oversight of the service and children's experiences. For example, some children only had access to parts of the home, not full access when foster carers were out. Managers were not aware of this and were therefore unable to address it.

Training is available to staff and carers. However, the agency staff have failed to engage foster carers in the training. Some foster carers find the training basic and uninteresting, while others find that it does not meet their needs. Foster carers say that training is often cancelled and that they do not have a further opportunity to complete the training. Consequently, attendance and completion of training are poor. Additionally, there is no consistency in foster carer personal development planning (PDP). This potentially impacts on foster carers' ability to meet the children's needs and their motivation to do this well.

Changes in the senior leadership team have meant some staff have felt a lack of support and guidance. The quality of staff supervision and annual appraisal is variable, and these are poorly recorded. For example, the appraisal of one staff member had no date recorded and was incomplete.

Leaders and managers do not consistently challenge local authorities when their responses to concerns are insufficient or ineffective. As a result, this left a child in a vulnerable and unsafe situation.

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 within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to— 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 (b)) In particular, ensure good oversight of the service. This includes ensuring relevant documentation is on children's files and the documentation is clear and up to date, ensuring that carer daily records are completed and on file, ensuring the records of carer supervisions and ensuring that foster carers' ongoing suitability checks are completed in line with agency policy.	13 February 2025
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. (Regulation 11 (a)) This is with specific reference to ensuring that foster carers and staff take action to ensure the safety and welfare of children after raising concerns with the placing authority.	13 February 2025
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 there is clear consent from placing authorities and children to the use of CCTV for monitoring	13 February 2025

purposes. Additionally, ensure there is clear information on the storage and management of information recorded.	
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))	13 February 2025
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))	13 February 2025

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that children's safety and welfare are promoted in all fostering placements and that children are protected from abuse and other forms of significant harm (e.g. sexual or labour exploitation). ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service works effectively in partnership with other agencies concerned with child protection, such as the responsible authority, schools, hospitals and general practitioners, and does not work in isolation from them. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 4.7)
- The registered person should ensure that all staff, volunteers and the registered person are properly managed and supported and understand to whom they are accountable. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.2)
- The registered person should ensure that a written record is kept by the fostering service detailing the time, date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person. The record should be signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 24.5)
- The registered person should ensure that they regularly monitor all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.2)

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: SC064113

Registered provider: Time Out Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: Unit 17, Oaklands Business Park 64-68, Elm Grove, Worthing BN11 5LH

Responsible individual: Jeremy Cross

Registered manager: Alison Young

Telephone number: 01903 259900

Email address: office@timeoutfostering.co.uk

Inspectors

Vevene Muhammad, Social Care Inspector
Sara Stoker, Social Care 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
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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