

Phoenix Fostering

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Inspector	Dawn Taylor
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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The main office of Phoenix Fostering is located in the market town of Leominster in Herefordshire. Phoenix Fostering aim to provide young people with high quality care in family settings with professional foster carers. By careful matching of placement to the young person's needs they aim to bring stability to the lives of the young people and provide them with opportunities that will enhance all aspects of their social, physical and emotional development. Fundamental to the philosophy of Phoenix Fostering is the intention to develop a model of therapeutic parenting for young people who have experienced trauma, abuse, loss and separation and who exhibit a range of behaviours such as offending behaviours, aggression, sexualised behaviours and inability to trust.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection. Phoenix Fostering was register by Ofsted in August 2007. Since registering, a staff team has been recruited, a panel established and a small number of foster carers have been approved. Referrals are now being considered, however, at the time of this inspection Phoenix Fostering were not providing services to children and young people. Our inspection methodology relies on evidence found at the time of inspection and this essentially includes users' views about the service. As this evidence is not available when there are no children and young people present we have completed a proportionate inspection; the purpose of which is to decide that should an admission be made the service would be able to work to a satisfactory standard. Although the overall outcome of this inspection can only be satisfactory due to no children and young people being placed, good features were observed.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not previously inspected.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young peoples' health needs are promoted because the fostering service provides health care, which supports their physical, emotional and social development. Staff and foster carers are well informed about health services available through Phoenix Fostering and in the local community. Phoenix Fostering employ a health advisor, who is also a member of panel and is available to give advice to staff and foster carers. Phoenix Fostering has also secured the services of a chartered clinical psychologist and a consultant in child and adolescent psychotherapist who will provide a consultation service to foster carers in understanding and managing the range of behaviours exhibited by the young people placed. Before a placement begins, information is gathered and shared with foster carers to ensure appropriate services can be accessed and specialist health care services put in place. There are procedures in place that ensure each young person has a health passport and health care plan, which is available to all staff and foster carers. This information is reviewed and up dated after regular health care appointments and statutory reviews. All staff, foster carers and children are given a leisure centre card. Young peoples' health is further promoted because all staff and foster carers receive training in first aid and health and hygiene issues. This training in conjunction with

clear policies and procedures ensures staff are clear of their role in terms of helping to promote the health of young people in their care.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Phoenix Fostering has a range of reporting systems and recording processes in place that relate to safeguarding young people and foster carers. There are clear operational policies and procedures, which are available to staff and foster carers that promote the safety and welfare of young people. Arrangements are in place to ensure staff and foster carers are trained and well informed about the service's child protection policies and procedures. Further policies, procedures and staff guidance is available for other practice areas that relate to young people's protection and safety such as; privacy and confidentiality, complaints, anti bullying and absconding behaviour. Phoenix Fostering recruitment publicity for foster carers reflects diversity and different ethnic groups to reinforce the message that applications are welcomed from all sections of the community. The approval of appropriate foster carers follows a clear recruitment and assessment process. The Phoenix Fostering team initiates all statutory checks, medical checks and personal references. Independent assessing social workers ensure that the form F's are completed fully before submission to panel. All Phoenix Fostering social workers are trained in the application of the attachment style interview for fostering and adoption. These interviews are used in the recruitment and assessment process in order to ensure the suitability of applicants. Phoenix Fostering has systems in place to ensure that young people are well matched to foster carers and to promote the protection and safety of young people. A matching pro-forma for all placements has been developed, which enables appropriate matches of young people's needs to carers' skills. All referrals and matching of placements are made through the fostering manager. The agency has forms in place to record when unannounced visits are conducted and a system has been developed to make sure foster carers' transport is safe and appropriate to young peoples' needs. The agency has a safe caring policy in place for each fostering household to ensure the protection of each member of the home. This is reviewed on the placement of a young person alongside the foster carer's health and safety check and made specific to the individual placed. This is good practice and ensures the individual needs of every young person is considered. Where a risk has been identified a detailed risk assessment is completed. Staff and foster carers received specific behaviour management training to ensure that they are informed about practices and strategies that support young people to behave well. Phoenix fostering has appropriate policies and staff guidance in place for the safe control and intervention of challenging behaviours. Young peoples' safety and welfare is further promoted by a clear staff vetting procedure that ensures criminal record bureau checks are renewed every three years. All employees are provided with appropriate written contracts, job descriptions and conditions of service. Phoenix Fostering has its own fostering panel and has good policies and procedures to support the effective operation of the panel. The level of scrutiny demonstrated in the panel minutes evidence a quality assurance function is being provided by the panel to ensure good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff and foster carers are aware of the importance of promoting individual needs within the foster placement and encouraging young people to enjoy and achieve. Phoenix Fostering ensures the issue of diversity is considered during the recruitment and training of foster carers

and the referral and matching process for young people. Diversity is explored during the foster carers' assessment process to ensure the appropriate awareness and values of prospective carers. Additional support, training and information is available for panel members, staff and foster carers to enable young people to be provided with the best possible care and to develop a positive understanding of their heritage. Staff and foster carers recognise the importance of supporting young people with a disability to have access to required medical care and specialist education where needed. Phoenix Fostering recognises for young people of statutory school age, the need to maintain or secure a stable education placement is of vital importance. Continuity of education will always be supported wherever possible. Phoenix Fostering employ an education co-ordinator specifically dedicated to oversee the educational plans and development of all young people placed. Each young person's education and educational needs is monitored and reviewed by the educational co-ordinator who advocates on their behalf for the provision of service from local schools. Each family is provided with a computer, printer and educational programmes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Phoenix Fostering promote contact with parents and significant people in young peoples lives in line with their placement plans. The requirements for contact are considered at the referral and matching stage. Contact with birth families and friends form part of the foster placement agreement and foster carers' supervision sessions. The importance of positive contact is emphasised in training for staff and foster carers and is supported through the foster carer's monthly supervision. Phoenix Fostering promotes young peoples opinions and those of their families. The agency's family support team meet foster children on a minimum of a monthly basis. There is a clear complaints procedure in place that states that it is important that all concerns or complaints are taken seriously and dealt with as soon as possible.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Phoenix Fostering promote independence and support children and young people to develop life skills through an independence programme. This programme assists young people to achieve independence through aspects of personal and social development. All staff and foster carers have received training in the independent living package. Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses. There is clear written guidance in place for all foster carers about the allowances and expenses payable and how to access them.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Phoenix Fostering has a clear statement of purpose and young person's guides that describes its function and services that are delivered. The statement of purpose is up to date and widely available to those people who have an interest in what Phoenix Fostering does. The young person's guides have been reviewed and are in appropriate formats that are attractive and easy to understand and read. The registered manager is appropriately skilled, experienced and qualified. There are systems in place for the registered person to monitor the systems in place to deliver a good quality service, however, these systems do not detail how the quality of foster care is going to be improved. Staff have a comprehensive manual of procedures. Procedures relating to foster carers are contained within the foster carer handbook. Both manuals of

procedures are available on CD-ROM. Staff are effectively managed and supported through supervision, management meetings and team meetings, which enable information to be communicated efficiently throughout the organisation. Staff meetings include managers, partners, staff and foster carers, which enhances the non-hierarchical regime promoted by Phoenix Fostering. Foster carers have a nominated representative who attends all staff meetings and feeds back to foster carers. All staff are subject to an annual performance review. Phoenix Fostering is committed to establishing a trained and skilled workforce through staff and foster carers undertaking appropriate courses at relevant points in their career, to include both general and specialised skills at basic and advanced levels. Staff are encouraged to undertake relevant post-qualifying courses. In addition, training days take place throughout the year involving panel members, independent assessing social workers, foster carers and staff. The training programme is reviewed annually and includes mandatory training in therapeutic parenting, attachment and therapeutic crisis intervention. Young people's needs are promoted because they are supported by a staff team of professionals with a range of skills and experience suitable to work with young people in foster care. The staff team is managed ethically and efficiently always focusing on the needs of young people. The workforce provides a twenty-four hour on call service and includes independent assessing social workers, supervising social workers who support the foster carers, family support workers who support the young people and foster carers, specialist advisors in health and education and therapeutic professionals. Social workers manage small caseloads, averaging eight families, allowing them to provide an intensive level of support and supervision to foster carers. All foster carers have their own supervising social worker allocated to them, whose role is to offer support, guidance and professional supervision in all aspects of their role. This includes the foster carers annual review. The supervising social worker visits the foster carer at least once a month with telephone contact between visits. Visits provide opportunities to discuss progress, achievements, difficulties or concerns. There is written guidance with regard to safekeeping and retention of records.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service are further developed to ensure the quality of service is continually improved NMS 4.1.

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for independent fostering agency

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes the health and development of children (NMS 12)

Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable (NMS 3)
- the fostering service provides suitable foster carers (NMS 6)
- the service matches children to carers appropriately (NMS 8)
- the fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect (NMS 9)
- the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people (NMS 15)
- fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively (NMS 30)

Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service values diversity (NMS 7)
- the fostering service promotes educational achievement (NMS 13)
- when foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child (NMS 31)

Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person (NMS 10)
- the fostering service promotes consultation (NMS 11)

Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service prepares young people for adulthood (NMS 14)
- the fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified (NMS 29)

Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- the fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience (NMS 2)
- the fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 4)

Annex A

- the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 5)
- staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 16)
- the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff (NMS 17)
- the fostering service is a fair and competent employer (NMS 18)
- there is a good quality training programme (NMS 19)
- all staff are properly accountable and supported (NMS 20)
- the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers (NMS 21)
- foster carers are provided with supervision and support (NMS 22)
- foster carers are appropriately trained (NMS 23)
- case records for children are comprehensive (NMS 24)
- the administrative records are maintained as required (NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose (NMS 26)
- the fostering service is financially viable (NMS 27)
- the fostering service has robust financial processes (NMS 28)
- local authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.