

Hope Fostering Services

Castle Cavendish Enterprise Centre, 63 to 67 St Peters Street, Nottingham,
Nottinghamshire NG7 3EN

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency is privately owned and provides a wide range of placements, including emergency, short term, long term and parent and child.

A full inspection was carried out on 5 December 2022 and the service received an inadequate judgment. The service was subsequently suspended, and a compliance notice was issued.

Inspection date: 17 January 2023

Date of previous inspection: 5 December 2022

This monitoring visit

This visit was carried out to review the actions taken by the provider to meet the steps detailed in the compliance notice. The full inspection found serious and widespread failures, which resulted in children not being safeguarded.

Since the last inspection, the registered manager has instructed independent social workers to carry out audits of foster carers' and children's files. Although it is positive that this work is happening, progress is slow. This is because only a small number of files have been audited. Findings from these audits have found similar patterns of concern to those identified at the last inspection. The registered manager has not had the opportunity to review the findings. This is because the audits were given to the manager on the day of this visit.

The manager has identified that escalation processes have not consistently been followed through the management structure. For example, concerns raised by one supervising social worker were not reported to the registered manager via the team manager. Additionally, actions were not adequately set during staff supervision

sessions to support their development. The manager has now taken responsibility of supervising staff.

The manager and supervising social worker have completed training in contextual safeguarding. Other relevant training courses have been arranged. The manager has developed ideas for how she would like to review and change the agency's policy to better recognise the needs of children who may be at risk of exploitation. The manager has also made links with wider professional networks as a means of improving the agency's practice. Although this is positive, there is very limited evidence to demonstrate how this learning is being directly embedded into practice.

Since the last inspection, one social worker has left the agency. Although this leaves the fostering agency with two supervising social workers, one social worker will be new and will receive a thorough induction. The team manager resigned following the full inspection. The responsible individual has also resigned but will remain in the role until a new responsible individual is recruited. The registered manager has started to recruit new staff, but these posts have not yet been filled.

Although there has been some progress with the manager starting to identify shortfalls in the agency's practice, not enough progress has been made to meet the steps in the compliance notice. There has been insufficient review of the shortfalls in practice, following the last inspection. This is preventing learning that could help leaders and managers make meaningful improvements. Additionally, this would support leaders and managers to develop new policies, procedures and management processes. Learning is not yet embedded into social work practice in this agency. The team is not yet stable because important posts need to be recruited to and staff will require inductions. These steps are necessary to prevent children from being at risk of harm in the future. The suspension notice has not been lifted as concerns remain.

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 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))	3 March 2023
The fostering service provider must prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. The written policy must include a statement of measures to be taken to safeguard any child before making parent and child arrangements with that foster parent. The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for— liaison and co-operation with any local authority which is, or may be, making child protection enquiries in relation to any child placed by the fostering service provider, the prompt referral to the area authority of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by the fostering service provider, notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the fostering service provider, to the Chief Inspector, written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect, and of the action taken in response,	3 March 2023

consideration to be given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children placed with foster parents following an allegation of abuse or neglect, and arrangements to be made for persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, foster parents and children placed by the fostering service, to have the address (including email address), and telephone number of— the area authority, and the Chief Inspector, for the purposes of referring any concern about child welfare or safety to them. Sub-paragraphs (a) and (c) of paragraph (3) do not apply to a local authority fostering service. In this regulation “child protection enquiries” means any enquiries carried out by a local authority in the exercise of any of its functions conferred by or under the 1989 Act relating to the protection of children. (Regulation 12 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(i)(ii) (4) (5))	
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. The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that foster parents are familiar with, and act in accordance with the policies established in accordance with regulations 12(1) and 13(1) and (3). The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child’s care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6(3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (1) (2) (3))	3 March 2023

The fostering service provider must ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, having regard to— the size of the fostering service, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by it, and the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of children placed with foster parents. (Regulation 19 (a)(b))	3 March 2023
The fostering service provider may carry out an assessment of any person who applies to become a foster parent and whom they consider may be suitable to become a foster parent ("X"), and any such assessment must be carried out in accordance with this regulation. The fostering service provider— must obtain the information specified in Schedule 3 relating to X and other members of X's household and family, and any other information they consider relevant. (Regulation 26 (1) (2)(a))	3 March 2023
If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be confirmed in writing. (Regulation 36 (1) (2))	3 March 2023

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice.

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that the service has a record of the recruitment and suitability checks which have been carried out for foster carers and those working (including as volunteers) for the fostering service. This includes: identity checks; Disclosure and Barring Service checks, including the level of the disclosure and the unique reference number (in line with eligibility to obtain such checks); checks to confirm qualifications which are a requirement and those that are considered by the fostering service to be relevant; at least two references, preferably one from a current employer, and, where possible, a statement from each referee as to their opinion of the person's suitability to work

with children; checks to confirm the right to work in the UK; where the person has lived outside of the UK, further checks, as are considered appropriate, where obtaining a Disclosure and Barring Service check is not sufficient to establish suitability to work with children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 19.4)

- The registered person should ensure that in reaching a decision or making a qualifying determination, the decision-maker considers *Hofstetter v LB Barnet and IRM* (2009) and approach a case accordingly. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services', 5.40)

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: SC367371

Registered provider: Hope Fostering Services Limited

Registered provider address: C/o Brockhurst Davies, 11 The Office Village, North Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 1QJ

Responsible individual: Bovell Palmer

Inspectors

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector
Laura Walker, Social Care Inspector

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