

Ansacare Fostering Agency

Ansacare Fostering Agency Ltd

Weatherill House, New South Quarter, 23 Whitestone Way, Croydon CR0 4WF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This independent fostering agency provides foster care placements for individual and sibling placements and asylum-seeking children. The fostering agency supports emergency, short-term, long-term and respite placements.

The agency registered with Ofsted in May 2010 and the manager registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

At the time of the inspection, the fostering agency had 20 approved fostering households with 29 children in placement.

Inspection dates: 26 February to 1 March 2024

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: 14 May 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good-quality care and their outcomes are positive. Many of the children are in long-term placements and have continued to live successfully with their foster families for a number of years. This is also the case for a number of children seeking asylum. Children develop secure attachments with their foster families and have a very strong sense of belonging. One child said, 'Aunty helps me a lot. She's like my family, my mum. She cares about me.'

Children benefit from the fostering agency's matching process, and their identity needs are very well met. The matching process is robust and ensures that foster families can meet children's all-round needs, including their cultural, religious and linguistic needs. Some children seeking asylum are placed with foster carers who have similar refugee backgrounds that children can relate to. They generally choose not to engage with professionals in talking about their past, but instead choose to have these conversations with their foster carers whom they trust and know share similar experiences.

Children feel listened to and know how to make a complaint, however, they rarely do so. Managers ensure that children influence the shaping of the service, through one to one meetings with staff and through the fostering service's consultation exercises.

Children lead healthy lifestyles. They access primary healthcare services that help them to maintain good health. They have diets that are culturally appropriate. Foster carers ensure that children attend annual health assessments and that their immunisations are kept up to date.

Disabled children make good progress while living with their foster families. Foster carers are aware of the impact that learning disabilities have on children's lives and provide appropriate care and support. This care considers the child's level of understanding and their communication methods. Foster carers access specialist support when it is required. For example, one foster family is being supported by the fostering service's systemic family therapist consultant to understand and manage difficult situations.

Children's learning outcomes are good. The vast majority of children attend school or college regularly and are making good progress from their original starting points. Fostering service staff acknowledge and celebrate children's achievements, academically and more generally. This acts as further motivation for children to aim high in their ambitions. One child said their career ambition is to become a doctor and they are making good progress towards their ambition.

Children have fun and enjoy trips and events arranged by their foster families and the fostering agency. Children, especially those new to the UK, have opportunities to visit places of interest. Foster families celebrate festivals and host family events, which helps children to feel very much a part of the family.

Children receive good support to prepare them for adulthood. They benefit from input from foster carers and agency staff that helps to prepare them to manage their lives more independently. Older children have the opportunity to explore and develop skills in cooking, healthy eating, budgeting, doing household chores and managing their own self-care. Recording tools help staff to chart children's progress in completing practical tasks independently. Foster carers take photos and encourage children to collect meaningful memorabilia to support life-story work for when they move on. When young people move on, they receive the agency's independence pack which contains useful items to mark the occasion.

Some young people choose to remain living with their foster carers, in staying put arrangements. Others remain in contact with their foster families after they leave, for continued practical and emotional support.

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

The fostering service considers effective safeguarding as a priority. Foster carers are committed to developing positive relationships with children and the agency operates a culture of openness and trust. Staff ensure that they consistently review and monitor each child's safety and well-being. Children benefit from the fostering service's clear and robust child protection policies and procedures, which staff adhere to. This helps to keep children safe.

Children are generally not involved in offending behaviour, gang affiliation, the misuse of substances or alcohol, self-harm or going missing from home. Such incidents are rare. If there are incidents, children and foster carers receive support and advice that helps them to manage the risks. However, some risk assessments do not highlight all known or emerging risks. Risk assessments do not consistently outline strategies for foster carers to use to limit risks and some indicated risk levels are inaccurate.

Foster carers set clear and consistent boundaries for children which promote positive behaviour. They use effective strategies to help manage children's complex behaviours and to promote appropriate behaviours. Foster carers do not restrain children.

The assessment, preparation and supervision of foster carers have a strong focus on child protection, which supports their safe care of children. Unannounced home visits also help monitor the safety of children. Staff routinely conduct an unannounced visit to each fostering household every year and more if this is required. Foster carers' homes are safe and secure and provide children with a nurturing environment.

Foster carers and staff participate in multi-agency professionals meetings if there are concerns about children. Staff support fosters carers to take prompt and appropriate action to help reduce risks.

Complaints are rare. In recent years, there have been three complaints or allegations, resulting in internal standards of care investigations. Staff manage each incident appropriately and in accordance with child protection procedures. Investigation reports are robust and comprehensive and are written by independent social workers. Staff take action to ensure that appropriate support is available to both children and foster carers.

Recruitment practice is robust. The fostering service has good systems in place that ensure that the vetting, selection and recruitment of staff and panel members are thorough and promote the safety of children.

The fostering service has strong and effective working partnerships with other agencies. These include children's social workers, health and school staff and police. These partnerships promote an effective and coordinated approach to safeguarding children. A local authority commissioner said of the agency, 'They absolutely can keep children safe. The information-sharing is consistent. I have no concerns for their safeguarding.'

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership and management of the fostering agency are strong. Leaders are ambitious for change and strive to improve the fostering service. The registered manager is a qualified social worker with good experience of working with looked after children before managing the fostering agency. He is visible in the agency and has a hands-on approach to management, which staff and foster carers appreciate. The responsible individual is a former foster carer. Staff and foster carers consistently say that they enjoy working for the fostering agency because of its friendly, family feel.

Leaders and managers have effective monitoring systems in place for most aspects of the service's operation. These include the auditing of case records, the review and evaluation of the outcomes for children and the review of safeguarding incidents. Managers are consistent in their completion of quarterly overview reports and devise a detailed development plan with action points. As a result, leaders have good insight into the quality of the fostering agency, including areas for improvement.

Since the last inspection, leaders and managers have focused on approving high-quality foster carers. This has proved challenging and, as a result, the pool of foster carers has not increased for a number of years. Managers accept that there is a need to address this in order to provide more foster families that can meet the diverse needs of children. This was highlighted as an area for improvement at the last inspection.

Children and stakeholders have access to clear information that outlines the aims and objectives of the fostering service as outlined in the statement of purpose. Children's guides are a child-focused summary of the services offered and are available in age-appropriate, easy-to-read formats and in various languages.

The support, supervision and training of foster carers are excellent. A foster carer said of the agency, 'The staff and managers are brilliant and very approachable. They always respond, even the manager. My supervising social worker is very vigilant.'

The training, support and supervision of staff are also very good. However, managers do not conduct appropriate regular supervision with the fostering agency's support worker. Managers consistently conduct staff's annual appraisals. The team is skilled and motivated and staff have the same enthusiasm, drive and ambition for the development of the service as managers and leaders.

The fostering panel promotes safe, secure and stable placements. The administration of panel meetings is very organised, and panel discussions and recommendations are thorough and well considered. Panel members have the necessary knowledge and expertise. However, the fostering panel does not include a representative from education services. Staff carry out foster carer assessments that are of a high standard. The annual reviewing process is thorough and promotes the regular review of foster carers' suitability to continue to care for children.

Children benefit from the close partnership working between their foster carers, fostering service staff and other professionals. Communication between all partners is consistent and effective. This supports the coordination of children's care and their safe, positive experiences and progress. A local authority commissioner said, 'It's a fantastic organisation, with leaders who have a fostering background themselves, and so they lead from the heart.'

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 fostering service provider must ensure that the fostering panel has sufficient members, and that individual members have between them the experience and expertise necessary, to effectively discharge the functions of the panel. This refers to the appointment of a panel member with experience in the education field. (Regulation 23 (7))	15 April 2024
The fostering service provider must ensure that all persons employed by them— receive appropriate supervision. This specifically relates to the supervision of the agency's support worker. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))	1 April 2024

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure the fostering service implements an effective strategy to ensure the agency has sufficient foster carers, to be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the fostering service has and implements a written policy that clarifies the purpose, format and content of information to be kept on the fostering service's files, on the children's files and on case files relating to foster carers. This relates to risk assessments. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 26.1)

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: SC406245

Registered provider: Ansacare Fostering Agency Ltd

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Inspector

Sandra Jacobs-Walls, Social Care Inspector

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