

# Footprints Foster Care Ltd

Footprints Foster Care Ltd

Unit 5 and 6 Longham Business Park, 168 Ringwood Road, Ferndown, Dorset BH22 9BU

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a private company that is owned and managed by the responsible individual and the registered manager. The agency registered with Ofsted in March 2012.

At the time of this inspection, there were 27 children living in 22 fostering households, including one 'staying put' arrangement.

The agency provides short-term, long-term, emergency, and permanent placements for children, as well as parent and child placements.

### Inspection dates: 24 to 28 June 2024

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of last inspection:** 20 September 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## **Inspection judgements**

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Many children live in stable, long-term care arrangements and make good progress. They develop a strong sense of belonging to their foster carers, and some children continue to live with them beyond their 18th birthday in 'staying put' arrangements. They are supported to move into adulthood successfully and, where needed, have access to adult services.

Foster carers speak about the children who they care for with overwhelming pride and positive regard. They refer to the children as 'amazing'. This emotional warmth is often reflected across foster carer logs, and children's successes are celebrated. A new recording system measures children's progress effectively.

Children achieve good education outcomes. Many children achieve academic qualifications and move onto further education, and into employment. The agency has developed positive working relationships with schools to support children's learning needs effectively.

Foster carers liaise with medical professionals to understand and respond to children's specific health needs. However, not all carers have completed updated training relating to the safe handling of medication. Foster carers talk to children openly to promote good health, including supporting children to understand the risks associated with vaping.

The agency supports children to spend time with their family members and friends. Children spend time with their siblings and, where possible, they live together. Children participate in group and individual activities that increase their sense of identity.

In the main, foster carers report that they feel well supported, and that they benefit from an efficient out-of-hours service. Supervisory social workers visit foster carers regularly, and guidance is sought from an established clinical psychologist to promote the agency's therapeutic parenting approach. Some foster carers report that planned break arrangements are not always available to them.

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

When allegations are made, information is shared with relevant professionals, and action is taken to safeguard the child. Comprehensive investigations are completed by the agency, and the outcome is shared with the foster carers. The outcome is not always communicated to the child to help them to understand what actions have been taken.

Children rarely go missing. When children do go missing, there is a well-coordinated response to locate the child and return them home safely. Children receive focused

support from the agency's support worker to help them learn how to keep themselves safe when away from their home. Return-home interviews are completed by the child's placing authority.

There has been one incident of restraint used to prevent injury. The monitoring and review of this incident are not robust, and the child's views are not included.

Records do not consistently show how risks are managed, or how support helps to ensure that children become increasingly safer. Children's individual plans do not address all known risks, and there are not always well-established strategies in place to reduce the risk of harm. For instance, strategies to support foster carers to help meet children's needs during times of distress are not always effective, and, in one case, robust planning is not in place in response to the risk of suicide.

In the main, foster carers have completed training to help them to meet children's needs. However, the agency has not ensured that all foster carers complete training as set out in the agency's designated timescales. This includes training to strengthen foster carers' ability to de-escalate incidents effectively, and to provide safer care.

In response to one complaint, the agency has strengthened planning processes for parent and child arrangements. However, procedures relating to a specific area of safer care are not embedded. While there has been no harm caused to the child which the complaint related to, there was a delay in safeguarding procedures being instigated on two occasions. The agency has not ensured that all parent and child carers are fully informed about a specific area of safer care practice.

The notification of safeguarding incidents to Ofsted has improved, and the requirement made at the previous inspection is met.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good**

The agency is managed by an experienced registered manager and responsible individual. The agency has continued to evolve with the recruitment of practice managers, which has strengthened the leadership and management of the agency. Regular audits are completed to ensure that children's records are kept up to date, and all annual reviews are completed in the set timescale.

However, gaps in the quality of recording are not identified effectively. Supervision visit records do not always include how effectively the guidance given to foster carers supports children's well-being.

All staff receive regular supervision and opportunities for reflection to improve their practice. The agency invests in staff to support their continuing professional development, and annual appraisals are completed. All staff enjoy working for the agency, and they feel supported.

There has been some success in the agency's targeted recruitment activities to recruit new foster carers. A new foster carer said that joining the agency was a

positive experience. They said that their foster carer assessment was fair and balanced, and they felt prepared to attend the fostering panel.

The agency's learning from unplanned endings has increased stability for children. Planning processes with local authorities have strengthened to ensure that full information about the child's needs informs decisions about appropriate and suitable care. Over the previous six months, there has been a significant reduction in children leaving their care arrangements in an unplanned way.

The agency's arrangements for staff recruitment are effective to reduce the risk of unsuitable adults working for the agency.

## 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          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>In particular, safer care plans and risk assessments must detail known risks and provide practical strategies for foster carers about the actions that they should take to keep children safe.</p> <p>In addition, managers must ensure that all parent and child foster carers are fully informed about safer care practices.</p> | 23 August 2024    |
| <p>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))</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that all members of the fostering household complete training as set out in the agency's timescales to enable them to meet children's needs effectively and provide safe care.</p>                                                                                                                                | 27 September 2024 |

### Recommendations

- Meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to

assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. (National minimum standards paragraph 21.8, page 43) In particular, records should detail the effectiveness of guidance given to foster carers to support children's safety and wellbeing.

## **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:** SC442553

**Registered provider:** Footprints Foster Care Ltd

**Registered provider address:** 7 Cox Avenue, BOURNEMOUTH BH9 3LY

**Responsible individual:** Vanda Leigh

**Registered manager:** Stephanie Omosevwerha

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## **Inspector**

Louise Bacon, Social Care Inspector

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