

New Life Fostering Agency

New Life Fostering Agency Limited

Charter House, 848 Tyburn Road, Birmingham B24 9NT

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

A private company operates this fostering agency. The agency was registered with Ofsted in 2012. The manager registered with Ofsted in May 2018.

The fostering service provides short-term, long-term, emergency, and parent and child foster homes. It also provides foster families who support brothers and sisters to remain together.

At the time of inspection, the fostering service had 47 approved fostering households and 71 children placed with its foster carers.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 13 to 17 June 2022

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
---	-------------

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Date of last inspection: 21 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: outstanding

Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. This is because of the excellent care that they receive from their foster carers. Most of the children who live with their foster families have done so for many years and so they experience high levels of stability and consistency that promotes their welfare.

When new children move into their foster family, they are warmly welcomed. Foster carers prepare welcome guides to share with children before they arrive. This enables children to learn more about where they are moving to and helps to alleviate the anxieties that they may have.

Children thrive because of the loving and trusting relationships with their foster carers. One child informed an inspector that, '[carer and supervising social worker] are amazing, and have made a big difference in my life. I would not be where I am today without them.' These wonderful relationships help children to feel safe and secure.

Children develop a fantastic sense of self-esteem and self-confidence. The agency pays good attention to issues of equality and diversity. For example, children attend places of worship if they wish, and foster carers support children to safely explore their own identities and cultures.

Children confirm that they feel listened to. They are aware of how to make complaints. Children are able to influence the development of the agency through effective consultation. The agency's children's support workers ensure that children have a voice within the fostering service. This helps to shape the services provided to children.

A small number of children have moved from their foster home in an unplanned way. They were, however, supported in their moves and matched appropriately with foster carers within the agency. This means that children remain with the same support worker throughout and can continue to see previous carers during planned activities. This provides children with some reassurance and positive memories of their time living with their foster carers.

Children's health needs are met exceptionally well by foster carers and the agency. Supervising social workers and carers effectively with others as part of a team to support the children they care for, for example health and education professionals. As a result, the agency is proactive in ensuring that children receive the specialist help and support they require. The matching process of children with serious health needs to carers is impeccable. Because of this, the quality of life of children in the care of this agency is dramatically improved.

Children's learning outcomes and general development are good. They make good academic and vocational progress. Newly placed children have school places arranged for the next academic term. Children make steady progress from their starting points.

Children's social workers value the 'tremendous' support children receive from their foster carers. They recognise the importance of care planning to support children feeling secure in their foster homes now and in the future. Many children remain with their foster carers after their 18th birthday. They continue to receive encouragement while studying or training. This supports children to prepare effectively for adulthood.

A local authority social worker said: 'The carers and agency go above and beyond to provide good care to children.' Another social worker informed the inspectors that 'Children's schooling is fantastic. One of my boys is now working through his apprenticeship.'

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

Foster carers and staff of the fostering agency work extremely hard to protect children from harm and abuse. They ensure that the safety and well-being of children are paramount.

Foster carers recognise and understand any potential risk to children. Risk assessments and children's individual safe care plans outline how fostering households will keep children safe. These are regularly updated to indicate children's changing circumstances and child protection needs. This helps to inform foster carers about action to take when risks are posed. These strategies are effective and include, for example, how to prevent the risk of online abuse, children going missing from home and exploitation.

The fostering agency works with staff and foster carers to provide a trauma-informed approach to care. This supports foster carers to understand and manage risk or behaviours that may be challenging.

Investigations into allegations are prompt and appropriate. Managers ensure that their communication with safeguarding specialists, such as local authority designated officers and the police, is regular and effective. Managers take swift action where they feel that carers have not responded to concerns in an appropriate manner. Investigations take place which lead to further learning, additional training and assessment process. This ensures that children are kept safe.

Children rarely go missing from their foster homes and the number of incidents is low. On occasions when children have gone missing, the foster carers have responded appropriately and acted in line with the child's plans. Foster carers ensure that they notify and work with partner agencies. As a result, return home interviews

take place within the relevant timescales. These actions help to promote and maintain children's welfare.

Foster carers and staff receive training and written guidance that helps them to keep children safe. However, there is a need for some foster carers to complete and refresh their administration of medication training. This was actioned during the inspection.

Managers and the fostering agency administrator ensure the safe vetting and recruitment of staff and panel members.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

'New Life has a fantastic manager. There is no doubt that she is an inspiration to her staff team, foster carers and children.' 'I look up to her as an amazing manager and the best part of it all is, she doesn't even realise how inspirational she is.' These are just two examples of the many comments the inspectors received about the registered manager.

The leadership of the fostering service is excellent. Leaders and managers are ambitious and strive for continual improvement in children's achievements. The registered manager is qualified and very experienced. She receives support from a range of senior managers within the organisation, who are committed and equally invested in achieving ambitious progress and positive experiences for children.

The registered manager is aspirational for children and carers and has a clear vision of where the agency is going. This vision is shared among the senior leadership team. The ethos of the therapeutic model is fundamental in instilling the trauma-informed, therapeutic approach that everyone wants. The way this vision is communicated in all aspects of the agency work, supports foster carers in providing exceptional care and support.

Managers are invested in interacting with the children who foster carers look after. This involves managers visiting fostering households to spend time with the family and children. Leaders and managers arrange fun days and awards evenings, where children from different households are able to spend quality time with each other. Managers know important information about all of their children. While the managers lead this vision, all staff are extremely committed to this approach for children and carers.

The fostering agency has highly effective monitoring systems. Leaders and managers continually review an action plan for the continual growth and development of the fostering service. For example, both the registered manager and responsible individual prepare monthly monitoring reports of the service. The very regular overview of the service prompts change and innovation.

The agency provides foster carers and staff with exceptional training. The training

programme is extensive and of a high quality, which includes therapeutic programmes. It equips foster carers with excellent knowledge and skills. This helps them to care for children safely.

The service is well resourced to meet the needs of foster carers and children. Foster carers overwhelmingly say that the support they receive from the fostering service is excellent. Staff maintain good communication with foster carers and very regularly visit them and children at their homes. A foster carer said: 'New Life have changed our lives and our foster children's lives for the better. I commend the management team and staff for their commitment, ambition and passion.'

Staff complete foster carer assessments comprehensively. The annual reviewing process is thorough. This promotes the regular review of foster carers' suitability to continue to care for children.

The agency has an experienced agency decision-maker (ADM), who is suitably qualified and experienced, and provides a clear rationale when approving foster carers. The ADM will question the panel's decision if required and offers guidance for further learning. This gives further assurance that foster carers who are recruited have the skills and resilience to care for children and keep them safe. Following their annual reviews, foster carers are always informed of the decision of their continual of approval.

Good quality assurance processes, ensure that prospective foster carer assessments include all necessary checks and explore relevant issues. Fostering panel members prepare for panel by identifying areas of vulnerability to explore with the assessor and prospective foster carers. This provides robust consideration and recommendation on the prospective foster carer's suitability to foster.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are trained in the management and administration of medication. Prescribed medication is only given to the child for whom it was prescribed, and in accordance with the prescription. Children who wish to, and who can safely keep and take their own medication, do so. This specifically relates to ensuring that foster carers attend training in administering medication. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 18, paragraph 6.10)

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: SC447166

Registered provider: New Life Fostering Agency Limited

Registered provider address: Charter House, 848 Tyburn Road, Birmingham B24 9NT

Responsible individual: Gary Pickles

Registered manager: Jeanette Towning

Telephone number: 0121 3598811

Email address: fostering@newlifeagency.co.uk

Inspectors

Kev Brammer, Social Care Inspector
Melanie Griffin, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

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

© Crown copyright 2022