

Fostering for You

Fostering for You Limited 07756790

Unit 2.06, The Light Bulb, 1 Filament Walk, Wandsworth, London SW18 4GQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The fostering agency aims to offer a range of placements. These include emergency, short-term, bridging, long-term, short breaks, care for children with additional needs, and parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection, the fostering agency had 29 carer households providing care for 41 children.

The fostering agency has been registered since August 2012.

The manager has been registered since June 2021 and is suitably qualified.

Inspection dates: 27 November to 1 December 2023

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: 3 February 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Foster carers provide individualised and empathetic care to children. Children experience stability in foster homes, with foster carers who show high levels of resilience. Many children are living long term with their foster carers. Children live in foster homes that make them feel part of the family. This enhances the quality of their day-to-day experiences.

Children make good progress from their starting points. Foster carers are strong advocates for children. One foster carer talked about the impact of trauma on their child's early presentation. They stated that the child's achievements are now 'a glowing example of how things can turn around'.

Consultation with children continues to be a strength of the fostering agency. The fostering agency organises activities, such as a recent two-day Easter event. Children took part in arts and crafts, baking, and martial arts. This and other avenues, such as one-to-one sessions with fostering social workers, ensure that children's wishes and feelings are heard, understood, and responded to by the fostering agency.

Children enjoy a wide range of social, cultural and leisure activities. This is either on their own, with their foster carers, or with the fostering agency. One child struggled in social situations. They took part in a recent school production, which their foster carer was immensely proud of. Another foster carer supports their child to attend community events. This enables the child to celebrate their faith and cultural background. Children have opportunities to develop their confidence, independence, and self-esteem.

The fostering service promotes 'staying put' arrangements. This provides continuity of care, particularly for young people who are vulnerable. Young people can remain with foster carers until they are ready to move on to independence.

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

Children spoken to say that they feel safe with their foster carers. Children are protected, looked after, and talked to by their foster carers about dangers. Children know who they can talk to if they have any worries, and this would usually be their foster carer. Children can communicate their worries to a trusted adult who they know will listen to them.

The fostering agency and foster carers work well with other professionals to keep children safe. As an example, a foster carer met with the child's school to address bullying that the child was experiencing. The fostering agency has worked with youth justice services and a community voluntary organisation. This has helped a vulnerable child, who is not in education, to avoid becoming involved in negative activity. Structured appointments and activities are provided throughout the week.

Children rarely go missing from foster homes in this agency. Foster carers maintain contact with children when they do go missing and encourage children to return home. Foster carers and the fostering agency follow agreed protocols and procedures regarding the reporting of children going missing. This ensures that appropriate action is taken to ensure children's safety.

Leaders and managers take swift action when concerns are raised regarding foster carers. Leaders and managers undertake standards of care investigations, and foster carers are presented to the fostering panel to consider continued approval. Leaders and managers share the learning from these investigations to ensure that children are kept safe.

The fostering agency supports foster carers in managing children's behaviour. This is through de-escalation and restorative practice training. Foster carers develop positive relationships with children, in the main. However, the fostering agency's combined risk assessment/behaviour management plans for children are not specific enough. The assessments do not clearly identify behaviours of concern and the strategies that foster carers can use to manage these behaviours. In addition, risks identified for children do not consistently offer foster carers clear strategies for reducing harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for the fostering agency. Leaders and managers support an ethos of reflective and therapeutic parenting for children. Leaders and managers lead by example, and have high aspirations for children. This is reflected in the comments of foster carers and the practice of fostering social workers.

The fostering social workers spoken to say that leaders and managers support them well, with an 'open-door policy' approach. Fostering social workers receive regular supervision and discuss their own professional development, support to foster carers and progress of children. Leaders and managers undertake appraisals of fostering social workers. However, leaders and managers do not include the views of children in foster care as part of the appraisal process.

In many cases, foster carers develop positive, long-term relationships with fostering social workers. Foster carers find leaders and managers to be approachable and accessible. Foster carers describe 'a sense of being part of a family' and 'feeling supported and cared for'. Training for fostering social workers and foster carers is wide ranging. Leaders and managers support requests for advanced training. One foster carer said that the training helped them to reflect on their own parenting style and offered them strategies for managing challenges in their own life.

The fostering panel provides an effective quality assurance mechanism for the approval and re-approval of foster carers. The fostering panel composition is varied in terms of experience and knowledge. The agency decision-maker has been linked

to the fostering agency since its inception and offers a robust evaluation and analysis of panel recommendations. Two independent reviewing officers undertake reviews of foster carers within timescales. One of the reviewing officers has seen foster carers' skills and knowledge develop positively over many years.

Prospective and newly approved foster carers are prepared well for the task of fostering. One family described the assessment experience as thorough and 'positively intrusive'. This means that sufficient scrutiny of adults who wish to care for vulnerable children takes place within the fostering agency.

Leaders and managers have good working relationships with external agencies. This includes commissioning teams, local authority social workers, and health and education establishments. Leaders and managers ensure that the professional network is coordinated to address any emerging needs of children.

Leaders and managers have developed systems to monitor the day-to-day activities of the fostering agency. However, the inspector identified shortfalls in the recording of some documentation. There was no evidence of management oversight in these cases. This is a missed opportunity for leaders and managers to take immediate action to address issues that may impact on the care provided to children or support to foster carers.

The fostering agency is working to its stated aims and objectives.

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

Recommendations

- Being able to promote positive behaviour and manage children's behaviour well are central to the quality of care provided in any foster home. Foster carers need to be able to respond positively to each child or young person's individual behaviour and to be skilled at predicting, diffusing, and avoiding situations escalating. The child's safety plan must set out any specific behavioural issues that need to be addressed and the approaches to be used. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, page 13, paragraph 3.9)
- The registered person should ensure that safety plans that identify risks and vulnerabilities for children are explicit about the strategies that foster carers should use to support children to keep safe. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, page 14, paragraph 4.2)
- The registered person should ensure that when staff are formally appraised, and where they are working with children, this appraisal considers any views of children who the service is providing for. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, page 49, paragraph 24.6)
- The registered manager should ensure that in monitoring all records kept by the service, they comply with the service's policies. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, page 50, paragraph 25.2)

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: SC448784

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Inspector

Colin Bent, Social Care Inspector

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