

Voice Fostering Limited

Voice Fostering Limited

595 Tanworth Lane, Shirley, Solihull B90 4JE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Voice Fostering Limited is a privately owned independent fostering agency that is registered as a limited company. The agency was registered with Ofsted on 1 August 2012.

The agency offers long-term, sibling and respite placements. At the time of this inspection, there were 14 fostering households caring for 31 children.

There is a permanent registered manager in post. The manager is social work qualified and registered with Social Work England.

Inspection dates: 3 to 7 February 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 7 February 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Foster carers lovingly embrace children as part of their family. Children grow up feeling loved and accepted and with a sense of belonging. This helps children to form safe and secure attachments with their carers. Children make exceptional progress from their starting points. This is because of the warm, consistent and responsive care they receive.

Most children have lived with their foster carers for over four years. All children have plans to stay with the carers long term. This provides them with a sense of security and stability. Children often remain with their foster carers as they transition to adulthood. This provides them with important support throughout their adolescence and further education. It also helps them to develop essential life skills ready for independence. Young adults with complex care needs are able to stay with their long-term foster carers. For other young adults, they remain living with their younger siblings or have a home to return to while studying at university or joining the Royal Air Force. Children are fully supported to transition positively into adult life. In doing so, they maintain a sense of belonging with their foster families.

Most children live alongside their brothers and sisters. They grow up with a sense of security and stability and form lasting bonds. Foster carers help siblings to create positive childhood memories together. This helps children to understand their experiences and provides reassurance. Children grow up developing a positive sense of their identity, which promotes their self-esteem.

All children attend education. Staff and foster carers are fierce advocates. They ensure that children have the right learning environment to meet their needs. Foster carers and staff contribute to any assessment of need. They also challenge any undesirable outcomes effectively. Foster carers enable children to flourish in education or employment. They ensure that children have access to the right support at the right time.

Children are nurtured and cared for by carers who are sensitive and compassionate. They provide children with an environment which supports their healing journey from trauma. They enable children to move on from adversity and enjoy their day-to-day lives. Children develop aspirations and a zest for life.

Staff and foster carers celebrate children's achievements no matter how small. One child felt able to audition for their school play and was successful. Professionals described them as being selectively nonverbal when they moved in with their carers. They are now thriving in every aspect of their life. Other achievements range from leader status in the girl guides to joining the sea cadets. One child volunteers their time weekly to teach Hebrew to younger children.

The agency advocates for children to receive the best possible care. This includes seeking and commissioning specialist support when needed. Children receive therapeutic intervention in a variety of ways relevant to their needs. This includes equine and talking therapies. The agency has also commissioned a psychologist to support foster carers. This helps foster carers to develop better ways to respond to children's complex needs, supporting children to develop healthier ways of processing their feelings and emotions.

Children develop a positive sense of their identity. Foster carers are skilful at celebrating children's cultural backgrounds in positive ways. This supports children's self-image and self-esteem.

Foster carers help children to remain in touch with people who are important to them. Staff support foster carers and children to attend important family events. They support children to process bereavements, for example attending family funerals with them. One child has celebrated their bar mitzvah. The agency supported the child's family to attend by video link. This maximised the child's experience and feelings of importance.

The agency embeds inclusion in all that they do. Foster carers and children, including birth children, enjoy attending groups to do activities. Activities include educative workshops on topics such as online safety and self-defence. Children enjoy pottery, painting and cooking. They enjoy developing other independence skills, such as budgeting and using public transport. Foster carers encourage children to develop positive friendships. Children are routinely supported to take part in out-of-school activities. These activities enrich their quality of life, such as sports and youth clubs. Children take part in sleepovers at their friends' homes and welcome friends to their own homes for sleepovers...

Foster carers enjoy extensive support and advice from their supervising social worker. Support staff provide excellent support for children's developing needs. Foster carers said that the agency is supportive and treats them as one big family. They say that they never feel alone despite inevitable challenges. One foster carer said: 'They have walked alongside us, no matter what.'

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

Staff and foster carers follow rigorous safeguarding procedures and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. They respond appropriately to any concerns which may arise about children's safety. The registered manager works closely with external professionals when there are concerns. This contributes to a collaborative approach to keeping children safe. The manager and staff are diligent. They follow due process, implementing effective measures to keep children safe.

Foster carer assessments and yearly reviews are of high quality. Panel members and the agency decision-maker provide a vigorous level of monitoring. This enhances the agency's oversight of safeguarding and promotes children's safety.

The manager and staff are tenacious and diligent. Careful recruitment and regular monitoring of foster families is rigorous. Positive relationships between staff and foster carers support this. When there are concerns, staff and foster carers respond immediately, implementing appropriate safeguards. Foster carers cooperate with children's risk assessments and working agreements. The registered manager has good monitoring systems in place that encapsulate actions taken and decision-making in children's best interests.

Foster carers are in tune with children's needs and understand trauma response behaviour. They identify signs in children's behaviour which may indicate that they need support. Foster carers are skilful and intuitive. They identify in children's behaviour their coping strategies, for example using a swing in the garden or engaging in colouring. Foster carers then use these strategies with children to help them communicate their feelings.

The manager uses research-related material to enhance safeguarding practice. They incorporate this into training for foster carers, such as helping children to understand risk to keep themselves safe. Children devise their own positive risk support plans with their foster carers, for example when using the internet or spending time with their friends. This helps children to make safe choices while developing their independence.

Children rarely go missing. When they do, foster carers follow clear policies and procedures. This helps to ensure that children return home safely. The registered manager goes over and above to help carers locate children, on one occasion searching for a child with the police during the night.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The agency is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced registered manager. They are dedicated and have high ambition and aspirations for children. The manager is supported by a small but committed team. They oversee and support the outstanding care children receive, striving for continuous improvement while doing so.

The agency's independent reviewing officer and fostering panel are challenging and effective. The fostering panel has a new experienced, enthusiastic panel chair. The agency also has a children's panel. This enables children to contribute to decision-making about the suitability of foster carers. This is an extremely valuable resource and ensures that children's voices are heard.

There is a broad range of training for staff, foster carers and their children. They also benefit from workshops that cover a range of topics. They learn about being safe online, grooming and child sexual exploitation. The workshops are engaging and

innovative. They often use external agencies with lived experience to deliver this training. This enhances the agency's approach to managing risk and keeping children safe.

Staff receive regular, high-quality supervision. They are well supported and have the opportunity and time to reflect on their practice. The registered manager uses a critical thinking reflective model to support reflection, as well as exploring the learning outcomes of serious case reviews. The supervising social workers then incorporate this reflection into foster carers' supervision. This ensures professional development and encourages good practice to thrive.

The experienced registered manager leads and manages the fostering service effectively. They, and the responsible individual, provide comprehensive and effective oversight. The manager has excellent monitoring systems in place. They complete a review of every child's placement. They use learning from practice and professional feedback to enhance further children's experiences.

Foster carers are well supported by the agency. They also value the time they spend with one another. They share experiences, which provides them with knowledge and reassurance. This helps foster carers to develop confidence to advocate for their children's needs. This contributes to children receiving specialist care when needed.

Children's records sensitively document their childhood journey. They help staff and children to reflect on their experiences in a positive way. The agency is working towards children contributing to their own records.

Leaders have very recently restructured the service. A small number of foster carers felt that this has reduced the support for children. They felt that they had not been prepared for these changes. However, these changes have so far had minimal impact on the service overall.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that they consider and explore the views of foster carers after any significant change in the organisation. This includes consideration of any potential impact on children and implement support as necessary. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 15.1)

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: SC451077

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Inspector

Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

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