

Pyramid Care CIC Fostering

Pyramid Care Community Interest Company

The Cupola, Cupola Court, Spetchley, Worcestershire WR5 1RL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This community interest company was established in 2012. It is a non-profit making organisation. The fostering service offers several different types of placements for children. These include emergency and unplanned placements, respite placements, long-term placements, specialist placements for children with disabilities, and parent and child placements.

The manager registered with Ofsted in November 2012.

At the time of the inspection, the agency was supporting 19 fostering households and 31 children.

Inspection dates: 29 April to 3 May 2024

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: 8 November 2021

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children build trusted and secure relationships with their foster carers. As a result of these relationships, the children are making exceptional progress from their starting points. Foster carers have an excellent understanding of their children's needs, and children are flourishing and thriving because of the nurturing care they receive.

Many of the children have lived with their foster carers for several years and they are fully embraced as part of their foster families. For example, children have been part of family weddings and celebrations, and one child is referred to as 'uncle' by the carer's grandchildren. Some children live with their brothers and sisters, which enhances their sense of belonging and permanency.

Creating stability for children is a real strength of the agency. The therapeutic support offered to all children is outstanding. Children are supported and nurtured to regulate their emotions and feelings in sensitive and creative ways. Activity days take place regularly and are well attended. During these days, children can access therapeutic interventions relevant to their needs and level of understanding. This support is not isolated. The therapeutic approach is threaded throughout the support offered by the agency.

The agency uses several innovative ways to capture children's views. For example, supervising social workers use storyboards and talking books to help children to have a voice. Furthermore, all staff and foster carers actively listen to children and act on their wishes and feelings. Children are supported to attend meetings about their care. Recording and decision-making are clear and child-focused. Following meetings, the agency sends the child a letter in their preferred communication style so that the child has a record of what was discussed and agreed. This is a great example of ensuring that children are aware of the decisions made.

Children enjoying positive experiences is at the heart of the agency. The registered manager and staff make a considerable effort to ensure that children create lifelong memories. An annual residential trip is a firm favourite with children as it allows them to spend time together having fun. The agency's dream days for children are an excellent way of giving children the opportunity to fulfil their wishes. For example, one child wanted to be part of a circus, so the agency created a circus where the child and their friends learned to juggle. Sleepovers and social groups are another example of how the agency creates positive experiences for children. These events are well attended and children have formed close friendships with their peers.

All children access and attend education that is suited to their needs. Children's learning outcomes and general development are excellent. They make significant progress with their learning from their starting points. For example, one child, who was working significantly below age-related expectations, is now exceeding their

age-related learning and is excelling in their reading. Foster carers are strong advocates for the children's education, and they challenge appropriately if they feel that children's educational needs are not being met.

Children's health needs are consistently met. Foster carers ensure that children have access to local health services and manage the children's health plans effectively. Children with complex health needs are provided with exceptional support and are making remarkable progress. For example, one child, who has a life-limiting condition, is thriving and making progress beyond expectations because of the wraparound care they receive. Furthermore, the agency takes active steps to commission specialist support for children to avoid drift and delay with their health needs.

Children's family time is very well supported. Foster carers are trained to understand the importance of children maintaining key relationships with their families. This supports effective working relationships between the foster carers and the child's birth family.

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

Safeguarding practices throughout the agency are robust. Supervising social workers and foster carers have a comprehensive understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and what is needed to keep children safe. As a result of their knowledge and expertise, safeguarding incidents at the agency are low.

Children say that they feel safe. Foster carers have a good understanding of children's vulnerabilities and potential risks and will seek additional support from the agency to reduce the risk of harm to children. For example, during the inspection, carers were undertaking training focused on sexually harmful behaviour due to new risks emerging.

Over the last 12 months, the agency has faced tragic circumstances with the unexpected death of a child. This has been a difficult time for staff, foster carers and children. However, the response of managers to the circumstances has been remarkable and they have sensitively supported all involved with outstanding care. Play therapy and bereavement counselling have given the children the confidence to talk to the therapist should they have any anxieties or worries.

As a supportive measure, staff from the agency have visited and been in regular contact with the foster carers. Foster carers have been welcoming of the support. One carer said, 'The agency have extended a lot of support outside of office hours.' Furthermore, reflective work has been carried out to support children, foster carers and staff with their bereavement journey.

Children have formed meaningful and trusting relationships with their foster carers and feel they are able to talk to their carers when they need to. One child said, 'I have a great relationship with my foster carers and can talk to them about anything.'

Children know the supervising social worker well and they have developed positive relationships. Supervising social workers visit the children on a regular basis, which offers the children another trusted adult to share any concerns with.

A research-based therapeutic model underpins the care and support that the staff provide to children, and children receive innovative and therapeutic support to help them manage their feelings and behaviours positively. A thoughtful and individualised approach helps children's resilience and emotional well-being. Foster carers receive focused training and support to enable them to offer trauma-informed care to the children. This means that foster carers have a good understanding of the impact that trauma has on children and how they can support children's emotional well-being.

The use of physical intervention has increased since the last inspection. However, where it is used, this is in accordance with an agreed plan. Carers receive training in the management of behaviour that concentrates on de-escalation and the use of models of intervention that promote secure attachments.

Managers ensure that unannounced visits are made to each fostering household every year. The records of these visits are detailed and highlight that children are spoken to alone and that safety checks of the foster carers' homes are carried out. This provides further opportunities for supervising social workers to meet the children and ensure that they are happy and safe.

The agency manages allegations against members of the fostering households appropriately. If concerns are raised, the registered manager shares information with relevant safeguarding agencies, including the local authority designated officer. This ensures that children are appropriately safeguarded.

Recruitment of foster carers, staff and panel members is strong. There is effective management oversight of recruitment. This helps to ensure that only adults who have undergone the required checks provide care and support to children.

Children do not go missing. This is helped by the strong and secure relationships they have with their carers.

The use of a camera in one foster carer's home has been included in the risk assessment and safer care plan. However, the registered manager has not ensured that there is a clear policy about the use of cameras in fostering households.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The agency is led by a highly experienced and suitably qualified registered manager. The manager is child-focused and passionate about providing outstanding care and outcomes for children. The ethos of the therapeutic model of care runs throughout the agency and supports foster carers to provide outstanding care and support to children.

A strength of the agency is the stability and experience of the staff team. Supervising social workers are committed to the agency and value the support they receive from the senior management team. One supervising social worker said, 'They (managers) have supported my development.' Another supervising social worker stated, 'I feel supported in my role.'

The staff and foster carers benefit from regular and effective supervision. Records are consistently of good quality. Foster carers speak highly of the supervision they receive and the quality assurance calls that they receive from the independent reviewing officer.

Supervising social workers and foster carers are provided with a wide range of training opportunities to ensure that carers and staff are equipped to provide the right support for children. In addition, staff have undertaken specialist training delivered by the therapeutic lead and external providers. This has included dyadic developmental psychotherapy and solution-based therapy.

The fostering panel comprises a diverse range of appropriately qualified and experienced members. The panel provides a rigorous level of scrutiny of the decision-making of the agency. An independent reviewing officer also provides an additional measure of scrutiny of the approval of foster parents. Foster parents' annual reviews are comprehensive and are carried out within the required time frames. This is enhanced by the agency decision-maker, who makes detailed and reasoned decisions promptly.

Supervising social workers have small caseloads to offer foster carers a high level of support. Foster carers are extremely positive about the agency and the support they receive. One foster carer said that the support provided is 'above and beyond'. Another described the agency as having a 'family feel'.

The agency's partnership working with the professional network benefits children. Overall, children's social workers are extremely positive about the communication with the agency and the skills of foster carers.

The manager has good oversight of the agency's strengths and areas of development. He has effective monitoring systems in place. This includes quality assurance reports, quarterly senior manager reviews and case file audits. He uses these well to identify strengths and any shortfalls. However, the quality of care review does not include consultation with foster carers, children and their parents. This is a missed opportunity for the agency to have current information about the services it offers.

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 registered person must maintain a system for— improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(b) (3)) This specifically relates to the registered manager ensuring that the quality of care review states how the consultations the agency has with children, foster carers and placing authorities inform service improvements.	28 June 2024

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', page 50, paragraph 25.1)

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: SC453308

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Inspector

Lydia Isaac, Social Care Inspector

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