

Ownlife Fostering

Ownlife Fostering Limited

Dexter Business Centre, 3–5 Sandpit Road, Dartford DA1 5BU

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a small, privately owned agency. The agency registered with Ofsted in 2013, and the manager registered in 2014.

At the start of this inspection, the agency had 10 foster families, but one foster carer had given notice due to changes in their personal circumstances. This foster carer did not have any children placed with them.

There were 10 children living with foster carers, including two babies and a sibling group, at the time of the inspection.

Inspection dates: 30 September to 4 October 2024

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: 14 March 2022

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children receive good care, and they are supported well by their foster carers. One child said that they are happy, and they enjoy living with their foster carer. A young person who continues to live with their foster carer said that they love it there and that the foster carer is like a second family to them.

Children's wishes and feelings are considered when planning their care. Staff and foster carers act in the children's interests in their interactions with social workers and other professionals.

Children have developed loving and trusting relationships with their foster carers. Children become part of the foster carer's wider family, and everyone is ambitious for children to remain with their foster carers as long as possible. Some children stay with their foster carers after they turn 18. This provides children with stability, consistent care and ongoing support networks.

One foster carer talked about 'their children' who still come home to see them and have meals. They talked excitedly about the jobs some of their former foster children are doing and they said that what motivates them to continue fostering is that it is rewarding to know that they have supported a child to grow and develop into adulthood.

Other foster carers are also incredibly positive about achieving good outcomes for the children in their care. Without exception, they all said that they provide great care to the children because of the exceptional support they receive from the manager and staff.

Children make good progress in all aspects of their lives, including with their education. Children who had previously had poor school attendance now have excellent attendance records. Children are supported to have a range of experiences, including jiu-jitsu, swimming, boxing, cheerleading and acting. The manager, staff and a foster carer were particularly proud of a child who started riding BMX bikes; they have potential to be part of the Olympics team. Children also go on holiday with their foster carers.

Children get help to spend time with their parents or brothers and sisters when this is safe. This promotes close relationships with their families so that they have a strong sense of identity.

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

The manager and staff provide effective support to foster carers when they are concerned about a child's safety. They also work closely with other professionals to ensure that safeguards are put in place in a timely way. For example, there has been

robust communication with other professionals to explore how they can safeguard a child who is at risk of harm from interacting with unknown adults.

The use of physical intervention is rare. Foster carers have received additional training on how to manage situations that could put children at risk of injury. This has helped foster carers to have greater insight into de-escalation techniques, managing allegations, trauma-informed practice and attachment issues.

Very few children go missing from care and where this has occurred, it is managed in a caring and planned way. Staff support foster carers to follow appropriate reporting procedures so that everything could be done to safeguard children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency continues to be managed by an experienced and appropriately qualified registered manager. She has made improvements since the last inspection to ensure that the service is run well, foster carers are supported effectively, and that children get good care and are making good progress. However, the manager needs to improve her quality reviews.

There are now effective arrangements to ensure that foster carers are supported well when their allocated supervising social worker is away. Communication and record-keeping have improved, so that everyone is aware of the children's plans. Foster carers, staff and the manager receive regular supervision. The quality of supervision records has improved, with clear information about what was discussed and how action plans are dealt with.

There is an improved process to ensure that the recruitment of panel members safeguards the service, foster carers and children. The manager takes more time to scrutinise applicants' employment history, ensuring that she gets strong references, particularly for those who have previously worked in children's services. For example, she recently requested references from six former employers. She now routinely contacts the referees to confirm the information provided in references, and to ask more questions if required.

The quality of children's care records has improved, and most foster carers keep regular records about children. The manager and staff continue to support foster carers to ensure that they all consistently maintain daily records about children. Foster carers are aware that this is important as children might want to look at these in the future.

There have not been any new foster carers approved since the last inspection. The service has been good at keeping foster carers and the three who left did so because of changes in their personal circumstances.

Foster carers spoke positively about the support they get from the manager and staff. Foster carers overwhelmingly said that the excellent relationships between

them, children and staff made it feel like a family. Foster carers' well-being is an area that the manager, staff and panel chair are very enthusiastic about, and they are exploring more ways of developing this.

The agency's panel remains diverse, with a lot of experience and knowledge between them. There are plans to recruit a panel member who is care-experienced to bring a different perspective to the service. There is now more training and support available to panel members. The new panel chair is enthusiastic about the development and ongoing supervision of the panel members. A development day was planned for them to discuss how they will move this forward.

The panel reviews are now planned better. Panel meeting dates are now scheduled electronically, which alerts and reminds staff to prepare for reviews in a timely way. Panel members said that the timeliness and quality of reports is good.

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

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that there are effective procedures for monitoring the quality of the service. In particular, the registered person should ensure that quality reviews evaluate children's progress, and they include feedback from children and young people, foster carers, staff and external professionals. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 25.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the service is financially viable and likely to have sufficient funding to continue to fulfil its statement of purpose. In particular, the registered person should continue to recruit new foster carers to reduce the likelihood of the closure of the service, which may affect the care, welfare or placement of children. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 18.1)

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: SC454491

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Registered provider address: 15 Boyd Close, Kingston upon Thames KT2 7RL

Responsible individual: Carol Hammond

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Inspector

Thobekile Bandama, Social Care Inspector

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