

Five Fostering

Five Fostering Ltd

Miramar, De la Warr Parade, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex TN40 1NR

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Five Fostering Limited is a privately owned fostering agency based in Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex. The service was first registered in July 2013. There are nine fostering households registered, with nine active placements. The agency aims to provide short-term, long-term, permanent, respite and emergency placements.

Inspection dates: 4 to 8 February 2019

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: 9 November 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children make good progress as a result of the support provided by the agency.
- Children are helped to understand their feelings and build emotional resilience.
- Children's views inform the care they receive.
- Foster carers are committed and child-centred in their care of children.
- Foster carers develop positive and caring relationships with the children.
- Foster carers feel supported and part of the agency.
- Supervising social workers are experienced and knowledgeable.
- Training provided by the agency is comprehensive and focused on the needs of children.
- Individual supervision is provided regularly for foster carers, as well as group support.
- Good partnership working with other agencies ensures that children's needs are met.
- Staff are child-centred and committed, and work collaboratively.
- The panel is effective, consistent and appropriately challenging.
- The registered manager leads the agency with a strong child-centred approach.
- Appropriate oversight of the agency is provided through the effective monitoring systems in place.
- The responsible individual ensures effective scrutiny and guidance of the agency.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Specific job descriptions should be devised for each support worker role.
- A health and safety assessment should be completed where the support worker role includes home visits.
- Foster carer supervision should be consistently recorded.
- Children's files should fully record all decisions and details of incidents within them.
- Recordings should include appropriate use of language.

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, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
21: Employment of staff The fostering service provider must ensure that all permanent appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation, and provide all employees with a job description outlining their responsibilities. (Regulation 21 (a)(b))	31/03/2019

Recommendations

- The Children's Guide includes a summary of what the fostering service sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate. (NMS 16.4)
- Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. (NMS 21.8)
- All staff, volunteers and the registered person are properly managed and supported and understand to whom they are accountable. (NMS 24.2)
In particular, ensure that a health and safety assessment is completed, where the placing authority supports the child visiting the support worker's home.
- The manager regularly monitors all records kept by the service to ensure compliance with the service's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 25.2)
In particular, significant decisions and/or details of incidents are to be recorded, in the child's file.
- Entries in records, decisions and reasons for them, are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising, distinguish between fact, opinion and third party information and are signed and dated. (NMS 26.5)
In particular, be aware of the language used and how this may impact a child, who may access their file in the future.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children are at the centre of this agency's practice. This ethos is underpinned by the agency's preferred model of care. As a result of the high quality of care provided by the foster carers, children make good progress. This includes significant progress in the areas of education, health and particularly emotional well-being. Effective working with partnership agencies supports the progress children make.

Through the direct support provided by the foster carers, children are helped to understand their feelings. This, in turn, helps them to make sense of their experiences. Children are supported in developing their emotional resilience through the support and opportunities provided to them. The wide variety of activities provided by the agency enable children to take part in pursuits they may not have tried before. This helps them in developing varied interests and their individual sense of identity.

The caring relationships developed by foster carers are key to the children feeling secure in their placement. During the visits to individual placements, inspectors observed the positive attachments between children and their carers. Children were observed to be very settled and very much part of the foster family.

Children's relationships with their birth families are supported where possible. This, together with the promotion of memory boxes for children, supports their understanding of their identity. Children feel supported by their carers; as one child shared, 'They are kind to me.' Children see that they are valued for who they are.

The agency ensures that foster carers are provided with the skills and knowledge they need. This includes a comprehensive training programme which is continually updated to support their development. Carers value the training and support provided to them. Supervising social workers meet regularly with foster carers, facilitating group support as well as individual supervisory meetings. Individual meetings provide space to reflect on practice, and in the main are recorded to a good standard.

The views of children are central to the agency's approach, especially when a placement move is being considered. Foster carers, and the agency as a whole, act as effective advocates for children.

Child-centred guides for children ensure that they know their rights and who to talk to in the agency should they not be happy about the quality of their care. However, details of independent advocacy services are not included in the guides. The recordings in children's files reflect that they know how to share their views. However, the descriptive language used in one child's file was not appropriate.

The agency enables children to share their views about the service through different forums. This includes children contributing to individual foster carers' annual reviews. An activity-based approach is successful in involving children in gathering children's views. All children, including the foster carers' own children, are included in these events. This is important, as it helps all children to feel part of the agency, as was observed during the visits on inspection.

Through the committed staff team working collaboratively, prospective foster carers

are supported. This support was described as 'really brilliant' by one recently approved foster carer. The training provided is valued by prospective foster carers, and ensures that they are prepared well for their role. Foster carers feel they contribute to the matching process and the development of the agency overall.

The quality of assessments of prospective foster carers is appropriately reviewed by the foster panel. The panel provides consistency and effective recommendations when required. This, together with appropriate challenge by both the panel and the agency decision-maker, contributes to appropriate approval of new foster carers. and helps to ensure that children are looked after by caring and committed foster carers.

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

Children's needs are well understood. Individual plans include the identified risks and strategies in place to help manage these. Partnership working ensures that children receive the support they need to help them to be safe. The agency works collaboratively with placing authorities and the police when appropriate. Supervising social workers support foster carers to safeguard children.

This collaborative approach was particularly helpful when one child had a period of going missing from their placement. The agency provided support to both the child and the carer following each missing episode. Agency representatives attended meetings with the placing authority and the police to address these episodes. In addition, the agency recruited a support worker to help understand the child's reasons for leaving the placement. Although there are very few missing episodes, this was a good example of the safeguarding practice in the agency.

Foster carers are provided with clear guidance on how to respond to a child's behaviour. This is based on the understanding that behaviour is a way the child communicates how they feel. Through this, foster carers help children to recognise their feelings, in order that they can eventually express these verbally. The use of physical intervention is low. Where this has been used, it has been proportionate and in line with the guidance provided.

The agency responded immediately to an isolated use of physical intervention, working with specialist mental health services and providing additional training to support foster carers' understanding of the children's needs. This reflects the agency's commitment to supporting carers, while remaining clear about their expectations that physical intervention is a last resort. However, recording of this incident has not fully reflected all the details, including decisions reached.

There are effective systems in place to ensure that safer recruitment checks are undertaken. However, the job description for the newly appointed support worker is generic and does not include sufficient clarity about the expectations of the role. A specific risk assessment appropriately reflects the nature of the role but a separate health and safety assessment in relation to specific aspects of the role has not been completed. This would provide further safeguards in addition to the regular supervision provided by the registered manager.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager and responsible individual have a clear vision about the quality of care the agency will provide. Staff feel well supported by them, and together they are committed to ensuring that children receive good care. Both the registered manager and responsible individual really value the foster carers and support them to provide child-centred care within a family-based ethos.

There have been some changes of supervising social workers since the last inspection. Support for foster carers was provided by the registered manager when needed. The recruitment of new supervising social workers has provided consistent support to carers, which helps to provide consistency of care for children. The agency's development plan is based on steady and realistic growth which does not detract from the strengths of this small agency.

With an outward-looking approach, the registered manager ensures that practice continues to develop while ensuring that he listens to the views of foster carers. There is a shared commitment to a strong child-centred approach, which is a thread throughout the agency. The systems in place, including the internal quality assurance committee, ensure effective oversight of practice. This is supported by the monitoring and scrutiny by both the registered manager and the responsible individual.

Placing authority social workers said children are making positive progress. The registered manager understands the needs of the children well, as do the supervising social workers. This results in the right support being provided by the agency to meet each child's individual needs.

Staff feel valued and respected for the skills, knowledge and experience they bring to their individual roles in the agency. They feel happy in their work and, as one staff member described it, they feel part of a 'great team'. Through regular supervision, they are provided with the relevant support and guidance to undertake their roles. Staff and panel members participate in training with foster carers, which ensures that the whole team has the knowledge to contribute effectively through their respective roles.

The requirement and recommendations from the last inspection have all been met. The registered manager reflects on issues as they arise and makes improvements through changing practice. There are very few complaints, and this reflects the agency's approach to consultation, with matters being discussed as they arise. The only complaint received from a professional was appropriately addressed, resulting in no further action. The agency advocates well on behalf of both children and their carers, raising any issues with the relevant agency at the time they are identified.

The registered manager and responsible individual promote equality of opportunity through the regular newsletters sent to children and foster carers. These promote inclusivity in terms of activities provided during holidays and opportunities for children, including foster carers' own children, to meet as a group.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC462226

Registered provider: Five Fostering Ltd

Registered provider address: Miramar, De la Warr Parade, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex TN40 1NR

Responsible individual: Catherine Edworthy

Registered manager: Robert Edworthy

Telephone number: 01424 211122

Email address: office@5fostering.co.uk

Inspector

Maria Lonergan, social care inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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