

Ideal Fostering

Anchor House, 4 Bridgeman Street, Walsall WS2 9NW

Monitoring visit

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Ideal Fostering is registered as a private limited company. In September 2017, the management structure changed with one manager taking the overall ownership of the company. The agency undertakes recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers. The range of placement types provided include emergency, long-term, medium-term, short-term and parent and child placements. The agency has a suitably experienced manager who is registered with Ofsted.

Inspection date: 18 December 2019

Date of previous inspection: 25 June 2018

This monitoring visit

This monitoring inspection was undertaken after Ofsted received concerns relating to the assessment and suitability of a foster carer. The purpose of the monitoring inspection was to explore these concerns.

The fostering agency's quality assurance processes, including the agency's fostering panel, do not always thoroughly scrutinise foster carer assessments. As a result, on one occasion information contained in a fostering assessment was not fully considered and it was not clear why particular conclusions were drawn about a foster carer's skills and experience. In addition, the agency and the agency's fostering panel failed to identify that a disclosure and barring check in relation to a foster carer's partner had not been received prior to the panel making its suitability recommendation and the agency decision-maker approving the foster carer. No risk assessment was completed to mitigate any potential risks relating to this shortfall prior to children being placed with the foster carer. This lack of scrutiny does not protect children from the risk of harm.

The agency's decision-maker does not ensure that the decisions he makes in relation to foster carers' approval are clearly recorded. As a result, it is not sufficiently clear how he reaches his decisions and whether he has taken account of all of the available information before reaching a decision.

This undermines the quality of decision-making and has the potential to compromise children's safety and welfare. This was a recommendation raised at the last inspection and will be repeated.

The registered manager does not always take robust and prompt action when safeguarding concerns arise. For example, he did not ensure that all relevant information was shared with the designated officer for the local authority when an allegation was made against a foster carer. He did not ensure that the allegation was notified to Ofsted. Clear records about the allegation and subsequent actions taken were not kept by the agency. In addition, there is no clear plan about how to address concerns raised about the foster carer's practice and review the foster carer's approval in a timely way. This does not ensure that only suitable people continue to be approved as foster carers.

One newly qualified supervising social worker has not received regular supervision. This means that she does not have opportunities to formally reflect on her practice, learning and development. In addition, this shortfall limits opportunities for managers to have oversight of particular issues that may have an impact on foster carers or foster children.

The main focus of this monitoring visit was to address particular concerns that had been raised with Ofsted. As a result, inspectors did not review information relating to the recommendations raised at the last inspection. The registered manager has met the one requirement that was raised because they have forwarded the quality of care review report to Ofsted in a timely way. Actions taken to address the recommendations raised at the last inspection in relation to appraisals for panel members, the children's guide and effective monitoring systems to fully promote children's progress will be considered at the next full inspection. One recommendation relating to the quality of recording by the agency decision maker has been repeated as it was found not to have been met. Two new requirements and one new recommendation have been raised as a result of this inspection.

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
The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that— the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11(a)) In particular, ensure that panel members carefully consider all information presented to them to ensure that recommendations can be clearly evidenced. In addition, ensure that a disclosure and barring check is undertaken on relevant people as part of a foster carer's assessment.	21/02/2020
The fostering provider must prepare and implement a written policy which— is intended to safeguard children placed with foster carers from abuse and neglect, and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect. The procedure under paragraph (1)(b) must, subject to paragraph (4), provide in particular for— notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the fostering service to the Chief Inspector; written records to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect, and of the action taken in response. (Regulation (12)(1)(b)(3)(c))	21/02/2020

Recommendations

- Ensure that the fostering service provider's decision-maker makes a considered decision that takes account of all the information available to them. (National Minimum Standards 14.9)

In particular, ensure that the agency decision-maker's decision is clearly recorded and sets out how and why he has reached the decision.

- Ensure that as soon as possible after an investigation into a foster carer is concluded, their approval as suitable to foster is reviewed. (National Minimum Standards 22.8)
- 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. (National Minimum Standards 25.2)

This relates to ensuring that children have clear aims and objectives to support their progress. Managers and staff act on the identified shortfalls identified within monitoring systems in a timely manner.

- The fostering service must compile a children's guide to the fostering service, the details of which are set out in standard 16. It must be produced in a format which is appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of children who may be fostered by the service. In practice this means that it may be necessary to produce several versions of the guide, aimed at different age groups and including formats accessible to those with learning or communication difficulties. (Statutory guidance – Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services, paragraph 4.3)
- Each panel member's performance, including that of the chair, should be reviewed annually against agreed performance objectives. The service's decision-maker should review the performance of the panel chair, and for this purpose may attend a proportion of panel meetings but only as an observer. Views about the chair's performance should be sought from other panel members and from those who attend panel meetings, such as prospective foster carers and social workers who present reports to the panel. For all other panel members, the panel chair should conduct the performance review. (Statutory guidance – Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services, paragraph 5.15)

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the action taken and the progress made by the independent fostering agency since its last Ofsted inspection.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: SC472125

Registered provider: Ideal Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 1 Coton Lane, Erdington, Birmingham B23 6TP

Responsible individual: Seth Roe

Registered manager: Bharat Pattni

Inspectors

Jackie Line, social care inspector

Anne Daly, social care inspector

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