

Fostering London Ltd

Fostering London Ltd

34 Shelbourne Road, London N17 9YH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency registered with Ofsted on 4 May 2015 and is based in the London Borough of Haringey. The manager registered with Ofsted in January 2018.

The agency offers a range of placements, including emergency, parent, and child, and short- and long-term placements for either individual children or sibling groups, including asylum-seeking children. The agency's primary aim, as stated in its statement of purpose, is to 'provide foster families where every child feels safe, secure and valued for who they are.' The agency's priority is that children and young people leave with the best possible outcomes, however long they stay.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 18 approved fostering households, and 26 children were living with its approved foster carers.

Inspection dates: 18 to 22 November 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
---	--------------------

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
---	-------------

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: 10 January 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

Children receive exceptionally high-quality individualised care and support from foster carers who are dedicated, caring, well trained and well supported by the agency. The agency is very child focused and committed to ensuring that the children who are cared for by its foster carers achieve the very best outcomes in relation to education, health, social and independence skills, and emotional well-being. One social worker commented that a child is 'getting on really brilliantly.' Another said, 'The child's emotional health, medical and education needs are met to a high standard.' A further professional said, 'The progress is just "wow"'. Foster carers are excellent advocates for children. They attend meetings, respond promptly to telephone calls and emails, and take the initiative in trying to access services.

Outcomes in education are monitored exceptionally well to ensure that actions are identified if there are any risks to progress. Of particular note is the annual individual meeting for each child, convened by an education specialist. Most children have excellent attendance and are making significant progress with their outcomes in education. For example, one child is on course to go to university.

Foster carers and children have positive and warm relationships. Children become part of their foster carers' family and benefit significantly from a sense of belonging. Children are extremely happy and settled in their foster homes, and they feel very safe and well cared for. One child said, 'I feel I really fit in here.' Foster carers speak with pride about the children's achievements, as does the agency. Children receive certificates and vouchers in recognition of this, which promotes their confidence and self-esteem and reinforces positivity.

Participation and consultation are strengths. Children are encouraged to share their views in many ways, including as part of their foster carers' annual reviews, and the agency uses any feedback to improve practice. Two recent consultation events for children of different age groups ascertained views about belonging and participation in meetings respectively, and the agency is already using the feedback to improve practice.

Matching is very well considered. There is rigorous questioning of local authorities to obtain as much information as possible, and this has been recently further enhanced due to learning from a particular situation. Children are given welcome books so that they know about the foster family before they move in. If possible, planned visits take place in advance. Foster carers do not feel pressured to take a child and are fully involved in the decision-making.

Placement stability is very good and there are several children placed with foster families on a long-term or permanent basis. There is a very low rate of unplanned endings, and some children continue to stay with their foster carers once they are 18 under 'staying put' arrangements. This enables them to continue to feel safe and

secure. Stability meetings are always held if the placement appears to be at risk of disruption, to see what further support can be given to enable it to continue.

The agency plays a significant role in supporting foster carers and children to achieve such positive outcomes. In addition to regular reflective supervisory visits, there are support groups, training, a newsletter, resource packs and social events. The agency is very good at recognising foster carers' achievements and has implemented a progression scheme to acknowledge this and develop foster carers further. All this contributes to foster carers feeling valued and to their own sense of belonging to a community. As a result, they are universally positive about the agency. Comments include, 'The staff are exceptional, they are always there for you,' and 'They are incredibly supportive and go above and beyond.'

The preparation and assessment of foster carers, while warm and welcoming, are rigorous and ensure that, as far as possible, only people who have the capacity to meet children's needs well are approved. One recently approved foster carer said, 'Since the day we expressed interest, the agency has been available, friendly, helpful and professional.' The agency is exceptionally skilled at ensuring that the children of foster carers are very much a part of the process too, in recognition of the important role they play as part of the fostering family. It has developed child-friendly tools to aid a birth child's understanding of how a foster child may feel and to help them manage their own feelings when a child moves on. Birth children are welcome at any social events and their birthdays and achievements are also recognised and rewarded.

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

Safeguarding children is given high priority in this agency. Children's vulnerabilities are known and understood exceptionally well, and foster carers receive significant high-quality support to help them understand and mitigate risk. This is complemented by high-quality training that further develops foster carers' skills to enhance their ability to keep children safe from harm. The foster carers' training programme is extensive and covers all aspects of safeguarding, including online safety, and the agency expects carers to undertake training regularly so that their knowledge and understanding remain up to date. Detailed feedback from foster carers demonstrates what they have learned and how they will implement the learning in their practice.

All aspects of risk, both current and emerging, are identified and detailed in exceptionally thorough safer care plans that provide clear and meaningful strategies to minimise these. Regular review of these plans ensures that they remain relevant and active documents that are used proactively to keep children safer.

Although many of the children who are placed with this agency's foster carers have complex needs, they are currently not going missing from their foster homes or involved in other risk-taking behaviour. However, foster carers have very clear guidance about what to do if they are concerned, and they feel very confident about

managing issues such as unauthorised absence and children going missing. They know they will get prompt and effective support at any time of the day or night.

Foster carers are trauma-informed professionals. They understand the reasons behind children's behaviour, which provides them with the skills to respond in a therapeutic way to prevent escalation. Children feel safe and secure due to the consistent care they receive. They can talk to their carers about any worries. One child said, 'I feel really safe here.'

Any allegations or complaints against foster carers are responded to promptly and appropriately. The local authority designated officer is informed, and a multi-agency approach is used, as necessary. Foster carers are, and feel, supported during this process, and they have access to an independent organisation for additional support if required. Care investigations are thorough, and carers are challenged appropriately and enabled to reflect on what they could have done differently. An independent social worker has oversight of formal complaints, which provides an additional layer of scrutiny.

The recruitment of panel members, staff and foster carers has a strong focus on safeguarding. The agency is assiduous in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met, and the appropriate checks are carried out. At least two unannounced visits are carried out a year to the fostering household, and these are well documented and thorough. Home safety is a focus of one of these visits to ensure that children live in a physically safe environment.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The agency is led and managed by exceptionally dedicated, hardworking, child-focused professionals who have a clear and ambitious vision and ethos about what they want to achieve for children, which is accurately outlined in the statement of purpose. The leadership team is extremely strong, stable, effective, highly visible, available, approachable and knows the foster carers and the children very well. The two directors of the agency, who act as responsible individual and registered manager respectively, are both former foster carers and social workers with significant experience in managing fostering services.

Since the last inspection, the agency has recruited more staff, including two supervising social workers and a fostering support worker. This has had a very positive impact, giving leaders and managers more time for management, development, and oversight. The new staff share the same passion and enthusiasm for improving children's life experiences.

Staff are extremely positive about working for this agency. They feel valued and listened to, as well as being very well supported by managers who are readily available to give advice and guidance. They receive regular reflective supervision in addition to learning from practice discussions and annual appraisals, and they have access to good and extensive training opportunities to improve and expand their practice. The staff are child focused, highly committed and know the children well

because they spend time with them individually and undertake direct work. As a result, they can give foster carers child-specific support and guidance, and foster carers speak very highly of them.

Independent staff feel similarly positive about the agency. They say, 'Children are absolutely front and centre,' and 'I enjoy working with this agency primarily because of the high standards and expectations that they set for themselves and their carers.'

The role of the fostering support worker is a very positive development. It is flexible and enables support to be targeted where needed, be it individual or group consultation with children, helping with the development of independence skills or providing practical support to foster carers.

The arrangements for monitoring are excellent. There are effective tracking systems which feed into thorough and informative quarterly reports that are analytical and used to develop the service further. Leaders and managers know the service extremely well and have a very clear and ambitious improvement plan for developing the service further. This includes feedback from children and foster carers.

Partnership working is highly effective. A contracts manager confirmed that the agency 'works in the best interests of the child.' A representative from a school commented, 'They are incredibly supportive and keen to work with us.' However, this does not inhibit challenge where necessary, and the agency is tenacious at holding partners to account when practice falls short, to ensure that the service improves for children both now and in the future.

The agency's training and support of foster carers are highly effective and real strengths. Foster carer reviews are very thorough and ensure that foster carers' continued suitability is rigorously assessed. The fostering independent reviewing officers prepare very thorough reports that demonstrate that carers are appropriately challenged where necessary. The independence of the reviewing officers adds an additional layer of scrutiny to the reviews and is an added protection.

The fostering panel is well established and effective in making appropriate recommendations about foster carers' suitability and ongoing approval and variations to their terms of approval. The panel chair is very experienced, and the panel membership includes foster carers, people who have experience of being cared for, social workers and other relevant professionals. This provides a good balance of personal and professional experience which is well used to identify areas to explore in approvals and reviews.

The administration of the panel is excellent. Minutes are produced in an extremely timely way and are of a very good quality. This enables the agency decision-maker to make an informed and timely decision. However, although panel members are regularly appraised, this is currently undertaken by the panel adviser rather than the panel chair, as stated in the statutory guidance. This is an oversight and one which the agency is committed to rectifying at the next appraisals.

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

Recommendation

- The registered person should ensure that each panel member's performance, including that of the chair, is 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 carry out the performance review. ('The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering services', page 41, paragraph 5.15)

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: SC488788

Registered provider: Fostering London Ltd

Registered provider address: 34 Shelbourne Road, London N17 9YH

Responsible individual: Beverley Peat

Registered manager: Diana Searle

Telephone number: 02088151995

Email address: diana.searle@fosteringlondon.org.uk

Inspector

Rosemary Chapman, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

© Crown copyright 2024