

Tutis Foster Care

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

Unique reference number	SC489594
Inspection date	29/01/2016
Inspector	Mrs Lynn O'Driscoll
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Agency performing the function(s) of LAs

Setting address	Whitehaven Medical Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 7PA
Telephone number	07917235886
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Registered person	Tutis Foster Care Ltd
Registered manager	Ms Marie Devlin
Responsible individual	Mr Martin Birch
Date of last inspection	N/A

Service information

Brief description of the service

Tutis Foster Care Ltd, a private limited company provides Tutis Foster Care which is an independent fostering agency established in July 2015.

This is the agency's first inspection.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: An agency demonstrating and exceeding the characteristics of a good judgement where children and young people are making significantly better progress and achieving more than was expected in all areas of their lives.

Good: An agency where children and young people, including those with the most complex needs, have their individual needs met and their welfare safeguarded and promoted. They make good progress and receive effective services so they achieve as well as they can in all areas of their lives.

Requires improvement: An agency that may be compliant with regulations and observing the national minimum standards but is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement. It therefore requires improvement to be good. There may be failures to meet all regulations or national minimum standards but these are not widespread or serious; all children's and young people's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Inadequate: An agency where there are widespread or serious failures which result in children and young people not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome: **Good**

This agency demonstrates a strong commitment to developing children and young people's individual potential. They all benefit from the security of long term, stable placements. They are also an integral part of the fostering family and have formed particularly strong, trusting attachments. Consequently, they are all very happy, safe and secure and their experiences, outcomes and progress are all at least good.

Children and young people's wishes and feelings are central to their day-to-day care and there are also good opportunities to influence service development and government initiatives.

This agency is very new and are still recruiting panel members and carers. They are

very clear about specific placement needs and are targeting their campaigns and training accordingly. All the carers already working for this agency have completed the Training, Support and Development Standards and are highly experienced. They also receive excellent support to help them to best meet the unique and complex needs and personal preferences of the children and young people living with them.

Good analytical assessments are presented to panel, ensuring informed and appropriate recommendations are made in a timely manner.

All the carers feel valued as a fundamental part of the professional team working with each child. Effective partnership working with relevant agencies is firmly established to safeguard and protect the children and young people living in foster placements.

This agency ensures that carers receive all the required documentation to ensure they are providing appropriate care at all times and delegated responsibilities are clear.

In general all the required documentation is maintained to a good standard. However, the details of people working for the agency do not specify the contractual arrangements and the hours worked.

All three directors are accessible and approachable. The registered manager is highly experienced and has enrolled on the level 5 leadership and management qualification required of this responsible position. She has three years to complete this from the date of her appointment.

The first internal review report was presented to the board of directors after three months of operating. It is clear and reflective and sets out appropriate actions to drive continuous improvement. However, it does not demonstrate consultations with carers, children and young people and their placing authority.

Although the training programme was amended during this inspection to better reflect priority and future training needs, specific carer needs were not evaluated in the review report.

While these shortfalls are identified they are not widespread and have not had a negative impact upon the safety or welfare of children and young people.

Areas of improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s

meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
22: Records with respect to fostering services Include in the record in respect of each person working for the fostering service provider whether that person is employed by the fostering service provider under a contract of service or contract for services, or is employed by someone else other than the fostering service provider, and whether they work full-time or part-time and, if part time, the average number of hours worked per week. (Regulation 22 Schedule 2 (2))	10/03/2016
35: Review of quality of care Forward to Ofsted any review report on the quality of care provided and ensure the process includes consultations with foster carers, children placed with them and their placing authorities. (Regulation 35 (2) and (3))	10/03/2016

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

25: Managing effectively and monitoring

Demonstrate clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the service and in particular: timely training is made available to carers to meet the specific needs of the children and young people they are caring for or are expected to care for. (NMS 20.8 and 25.1)

17: Fitness to provide or manage

Ensure that the registered manager completes the level 5 leadership and management qualification within three years of her appointment. (NMS 17.3)

Experiences and progress of, and outcomes for, children and young people

Judgement outcome: **Good**

All the children and young people are very happy and settled in their current long term stable placements. For some this is within a context of previous disruptions. They have built up strong attachments based on mutual respect. An independent reviewing officer wrote, 'This young person enjoys a positive, loving, nurturing and secure relationship with her carers and benefits from lots of appropriate stimulation. Her needs are met to a high standard and the carer is a passionate advocate.'

Comments from children and young people include, 'I love it here and I want to stay until I am ready to live independently. I have got my own cat, I am in the Church choir and in the orchestra and I meet my friends at the local youth club. So far we have done judo, pizza making and comic writing together' and, 'We had a lovely Christmas spent with my carer's family and this Sunday we are going to a live dance show and then to a posh restaurant. I am so excited because it was great last year.'

They all benefit from highly individualised care which best meets their unique needs and personal preferences. This enables them to reach their full potential.

There are good opportunities for all the children and young people to express their wishes and feelings and thereby influence their day-to-day care and their futures. The agency's supervising social worker always chats to them at every monthly visit to their carers, which they really appreciate. The agency also arrange regular consultation events. The next one is to look at memory boxes. These opportunities reinforce to them the fact that their opinions genuinely matter and are valued, which in turn increases their self-esteem and confidence. For example, one young person said, 'I love my brothers and like to play with them but sometimes I like to be on my own in my nice bedroom.' This is respected.

Children and young people exercise a genuine choice about contact arrangements with their birth families in line with any legal directions, which is actively promoted and facilitated by their foster carers. This helps children and young people to understand their backgrounds and maintain their sense of identity. They are also demonstrably strengthening their emotional resilience towards a more positive future. One young person found a programme of focussed sessions with an emotional health worker really helpful in exploring her past relationships.

Comments from young people include, 'I loved Christmas and got loads of presents. I got a posh camera with a big lens. I saw my mum, went swimming and my carer sorted it so I saw my dad after a long time too', 'My other brother stayed over with us again and told his friends at school that he had a really fun time. Hopefully he is coming to live with us too' and, 'I travel independently to see some of my brothers

and sisters one weekend, then I spend one weekend with my grandparents, then one weekend with my mum and other siblings and I have one weekend a month free. Often, that's when my friends stay over. '

Carers provide children and young people with a child friendly welcome brochure about their foster family prior to admission. This helps them prepare for their move and gain an understanding of their future placement, so they settle quickly.

Children and young people really enjoy taking part in a wide range of stimulating, constructive and meaningful activities. They are fully involved in all of the fostering family events and holidays and in a wide variety of clubs within the local community. Many have been on holidays abroad, thereby widening their horizons and experiencing different cultures and trying new foods. One young person is an active member of a young enterprise scheme and has secured a part time job. Friends are welcome to visit and they enjoy sleep-overs at each other's houses This all gives them a strong sense of belonging.

Young people's individual interests and talents are actively supported, which serves to strengthen their competences and confidences. Examples include, singing, dancing, drama and horse-riding. One young person is a gifted musician and is thrilled to have been chosen to take a chorister examination saying, 'I will then be able to wear a medal in Church'. One young person has gained the confidence to perform in public. In fact, her solo opened the concert watched by 350 people.

All the children and young people benefit from good eating and sleeping routines and active lifestyles. None misuse drugs or alcohol. For some, personal hygiene has significantly improved. On admission, one child showed no emotion, had little movement and did not know how to play. She benefitted enormously from a calm yet stimulating environment and her social worker said, 'There were dramatic improvements in her physical development in this placement.'

Children and young people's comments include, 'I go swimming and to ballet and tap lessons every week and I have just got my gold award', 'I go to judo, swim, cycle and walk the dogs a lot, and I really enjoy our weekends away at my carer's caravan' and, 'I love playing board games as one big family and I am taking my white belt in karate. I play football, go to karate and swim twice a week.'

This agency has arranged for one young person to get involved in a national organisation that directly consults with the government to improve the lives of looked after children. She is also excited about the opportunity to go with a local youth group to an orphanage in Bulgaria this summer. This registered manager previously took another group to Romania. One of these care leavers is now a panel member for the agency and her insight and input is proving to be invaluable.

All these opportunities have demonstrably boosted children and young people's self-

esteem. One social worker said, 'My young person has grown in confidence, now gives eye contact and feels comfortable, so his sense of humour is now shining through.'

All the children and young people accessing this service are receiving appropriate full time education that best meets their assessed needs. Their attendance is excellent. Consequently, they are making outstanding progress from their individual starting points. As an example, one young person who was not going to school prior to being in foster care, has recently achieved outstanding national examination results. She said, 'I got six As and four Bs in my GCSE's and two BTEC distinctions.' Moreover, she went with her carers to an awards ceremony at school and won the highest achiever and most improved pupil. She is now studying hard to achieve four good 'A level' results to enable her to realise her dream of studying law at university.

One young person is in a small group for higher achievers in mathematics. This is only the second school term and another young person has already achieved her individual educational targets for the year.

Children and young people are supported to contribute to their personal education plans and their comments include, 'I'm good at all sports. I behave well and try hard. My carer says I give the best cuddles in the world', 'I like school and I work very hard. My teacher says I am a star. I am good at art and my carer is helping me to get better at maths. I am a good friend' and, 'I have learned about Judaism in religious education and how to look after my teeth in science. My teacher said that I always try my best and was pleased when I helped some new pupils to settle in.'

All the children and young people benefit from opportunities to develop age and ability appropriate life skills to prepare them for successful independent living in the future. Many have improved their social skills and gained the confidence to embrace community activities. A social worker said, 'My child made considerable progress with speech and language with these carers.' An independent reviewing officer concluded, 'This young person has made excellent progress with this carer who is actively supporting her growing independence.'

One young person has just got her provisional driving licence and, 'can't wait' to start driving lessons. One child said, 'I can get washed and dressed by myself and I like to help to cook.'

Some young people have successfully moved on into independence, secure in the knowledge of continued practical and emotional support from their carers for as long as they need it. Others know they can remain beyond 18 for as long as they wish to. One carer said, 'We chose this house together and it's her home for as long as she wants it.'

Quality of service

Judgement outcome: **Good**

This agency is small, but benefits from very experienced carers who have the expertise to meet a wide range of needs. Examples include, children with complex physical needs, learning disabilities, sibling groups and teenagers. One sibling group were sensitively supported through the tragic loss of a close relative and then gradually moved on to live with family members where they are happy and settled.

They also have a respite carer who is well known to all the children and young people, so they are happy to go and stay with her if needed. She liaises well with full time carers to ensure consistency of care during their short stay, which effectively helps to successfully maintain their long term placements.

All current carers have transferred from another agency. There is clear evidence of protocol meetings where everyone in attendance agreed with the decision so no placements were disrupted. Young people said that moving agencies has made little difference to their day-to-day life, but they do see more of the supervising social worker and managers. One carer said, 'I particularly like the way this agency have taken the time to get to know the children as well as me.'

These competent carers are very strong advocates for the children and young people. This has successfully ensured that: medical tests are undertaken in a timely manner; life story work has commenced; there are no delays in permanence planning; and, constructive contact with estranged family members is re-established.

The agency are receiving frequent referrals from different placing authorities but are purposely prioritising the needs of the children and young people already in placement. A robust matching process is in place. They have identified a clear need for parent and child placements. In response, they have planned for carers interested in this specialist area to receive good quality training before accepting placements.

All the carers have completed the training, support and development standards and confirm that the courses provided by this agency, to date, have been of a good quality. There was particularly positive feedback from the recent external attachment training and personal education planning course. One carer said, 'I have got a much better understanding of pupil premiums.' This serves to build their confidence to appropriately advocate and challenge other professionals.

There is good evidence of this agency successfully chasing placing authorities to ensure carers receive all the required documentation they need to safeguard and

meet the specific needs of the young people placed with them. All the carers are very clear about the specific responsibilities delegated to them.

This service is also particularly pro-active in ensuring that specialist services are involved in a timely manner to effectively support young people with more complex needs.

This agency supports the carers to a high standard. Carers say there is an excellent response from the on-call service. This has resulted in very good stability rates.

Carers confirm good communication within the agency and are kept up to date with developments. They feel highly valued as an integral part of the professional team working with the child and are actively involved in care planning. They also confirm that the organisation listens to them as carers. Comments from carers include, 'We get very good support from the agency and each other. All the children know the other carers so they are happy to have respite at their home if ever needed', 'I enjoy the carer support groups. There is good interaction' and, 'I am impressed with the organisation of this agency which gives me, as a carer, reassurance. I have already got the dates for support groups and training throughout the year which is good because I can organise my leave well in advance.'

A relatively new, yet robust panel, is in place to which they are continuing to recruit. The aim is to improve the gender balance and to have specific expertise in health and education. Clear policies and procedures and a thorough induction gave members confidence in their new role. Panel confirm that the agency minute taker is very efficient and very clear about confidentiality.

The panel is well-chaired by an independent and highly experienced individual who ensures all members fully contribute. There is clear evidence that the panel stringently exercise their quality assurance functions. The agency ensures that all the required documentation is sent out in good time, so that all members are fully prepared and the panel have direct access to sound medical and legal advice.

Applicants find the assessment process appropriately thorough, yet supportive and informative. Good quality analytical assessments enable informed timely and appropriate recommendations and approvals. Comments from panel members include, 'This report was clear and well written. The carers' genuine love of children is well evidenced along with their good attitude to training and development. Relevant experience was documented throughout' and, 'This is a very clear and detailed report. A good quality assessment backed up with evidence. All issues were covered thoroughly. The supervising social worker presented well. All questions raised were answered with confidence.'

The chair said, 'It is still new but so far so good. This is a very open agency but that said, I will not hesitate to challenge if I have any concerns at all.' Quarterly meetings

with the Directors are already scheduled in for the year to constantly review and revise the panel processes as necessary.

Social workers are highly satisfied with the quality of care provided and the consequent progress made. Comments include, 'This carer is very child focussed and self-motivated to meet the needs of the children in her care and is a strong advocate for them. Consequently, they have exceeded all placement objectives' and, 'The young man has an excellent relationship with his carer and his self-esteem has progressed in leaps and bounds.'

Carers have sensitively and gradually established excellent relationships with birth families so they feel valued and are then empowered to be fully involved in care planning. Consequently, they are supportive of their children's long term placements. One mum felt honoured to be invited to be a part of her daughter's special prom night. Other carers have supported children to successfully return home. One mum said, 'I couldn't wish for a better person to care for my child.'

Safeguarding children and young people

Judgement outcome: **Good**

All the young people are very happy and feel safe and secure living with their current foster carers and in their local communities. The stability rate is excellent and there have been no disruptions.

Two siblings requested at their last review that they stayed with their carers long term, because they are so happy there. Moreover, their social worker is now looking to place a third sibling because she is so impressed with this placement. She said, 'The transition to this agency was a seamless process. The care has been fantastic and their confidence and development have increased so much. They are very happy and have good attachments. They go to school every day, are kept very active and enjoy a wealth of activities.'

Many carers are providing excellent care to children and young people with extremely complex needs and challenging behaviours. They all respond positively to the fair and structured boundaries in place and consequently none have needed to be restrained in their current placements. Carers say the recent attachment training really helped them to better understand behaviours. Comments include, 'It was good to learn about attachments from birth and how this affects the child growing up', 'It was good to get an understanding of the theory behind behaviours' and, 'This course provided really useful ways of managing different children and young people in

different situations.’ The panel particularly highlighted that the respite carer liaises with full time carers to ensure a consistent approach to behaviour management.

Carers provide appropriate love, nurture and empathy whilst not minimising behavioural concerns. They clearly see the child’s needs beyond the presenting behaviours, yet are vigilant in respect to risks.

All the staff and carers are trained in safeguarding to ensure correct procedures are followed if a child discloses abuse. Individualised safer caring plans are in place. One child said, ‘I helped to draw up a fire escape plan so I now know what to do if we ever had a fire.’

These highly experienced carers also have the competence and confidence to enable children and young people to take age-appropriate risks as part of their natural development into adulthood. Examples include, traveling independently on public transport to and from school and family contact and having their own front door key. One vulnerable young person has started going out with friends in the local vicinity. Another young child enjoys going to the local shop and being trusted with money.

None of the young people go missing from their current placements. The local joint protocol with the police is fully explored during the assessment and pre-approval training, so carers know exactly what to do should a child go missing. None are deemed at risk of child sexual exploitation. None are involved in criminal activities. This is all outstanding progress given the complexity of their histories.

The recruitment and selection processes in place meet regulatory requirements to ensure a safe and competent workforce.

Leadership and management

Judgement outcome: **Good**

This service is new and very small but it remains financially viable and they are receiving frequent referrals from a range of placing authorities. Their business plan is to have 12 children and young people in longer term, well-matched placements within 12 months of operating, so they are on target to achieve this. Comments from the Directors include, ‘I am not concerned because we are growing at the rate we envisaged’, ‘We want to recruit quality carers over quantity’ and, ‘Although early days, the service is developing effectively.’

The service is currently advertising through their website and social media but the most effective to date has been word of mouth. All the current carers have transferred from another agency specifically because this is a more local service and

the manager and supervising social have an excellent reputation for providing outstanding support. Comments include, 'They are always there for you. It's that sort of commitment that makes the difference. The children always come first with this agency', 'I get regular good quality supervision. Our supervising social worker is marvellous with the children too so they open up to her', 'It's fabulous with this service. The manager will make time for you if you need additional support, even on Christmas Day. She is so laid back and knows what she is doing. We talk things through so it makes sense' and, 'When we moved over to this agency the children were being adopted after nearly three years with us. This agency recognised that it was a very emotional time and we got so much help from the manager and our supervising social worker.'

There are no previous requirements or recommendations as this is the first inspection since registration on 30 July 2015.

The registered manager is a highly experienced and child focussed individual. She is genuinely passionate about improving children's lives and leads by example, so she is highly regarded by all the carers. Moreover, she has excellent local knowledge and a wide range of professional links, thus ensuring timely bespoke training courses and consultation opportunities for both carers and looked after children.

She has just enrolled on the level 5 qualification required of this responsible position. It has also been confirmed that she does not need to re-take the modules already completed in her previous employ so she anticipates finishing quickly.

Carers say this is a particularly open and transparent agency and the three directors are all accessible and approachable. The service have got up-to-date information on the foster carer charter with a view to discussing and agreeing it at a support group.

This service have a range of monitoring systems in place to inform service development, including a bespoke IT system, monthly monitoring and three monthly review reports presented to the board of directors. The first internal review report on the quality of service provision is accurate, clear and reflective and sets out appropriate actions to drive continuous improvement. However, it does not include the views of children and young people in placement, their carers and other relevant stakeholders. This is unfortunate given the plethora of positive feedback available.

Moreover, although the training programme was amended during this inspection to better reflect priority and future training needs, specific carer needs were not evaluated in the review report.

In general all the required documentation is maintained to a good standard. However, the details of persons working for the agency do not specify the contractual arrangements and the hours worked. Although this is a regulatory shortfall it has no impact on the safety or welfare of children and young people.

The statement of purpose is regularly reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure it is always an accurate reflection of the aims and services provided. There are two versions of the children's guide to meet different needs so they know what services are available to them, their rights and responsibilities and how to complain if the need ever arises.

There has only been one notifiable event to date, which was forwarded to Ofsted in a timely manner. This demonstrates that appropriate action has been taken to safeguard and protect the young people in full collaboration with other relevant agencies.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to inform children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards and to support services to improve.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of independent fostering agencies.