

Fostering Solutions - Oundle

Fostering Solutions Limited

Fostering Solutions, Wharf House, Station Road, Oundle, Peterborough, PE8 4DE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Fostering Solutions – Oundle is a privately owned independent fostering agency. It provides a wide range of placements including emergency, bridging, short-term, long-term, respite and parent and child placements.

At the time of this inspection, the agency had 66 fostering households, and 112 children were being cared for by foster carers.

There is an experienced manager who registered with Ofsted in 2018.

Inspection dates: 5 to 9 August 2024

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The independent fostering agency provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of last inspection: 17 January 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 bespoke, individualised care from dedicated foster carers. Where children have additional needs, the agency works effectively with external professionals to ensure their needs are met. For example, through provision of adaptations and specialist services. One child has been creatively empowered to make their own day to day decisions and has an electronic life story book they can access at any time. This ensures children have enhanced life chances and they make very good progress.

Foster carers submit written records to the agency about the children in their care. Some records include negative phrases about children which can be stigmatising for them and impact negatively on how they are viewed by others.

The agency ensures children's health needs are well met. They are up to date with routine dental, optician and general health appointments. The agency helps foster carers to understand children's emotional needs and how their lived experiences can shape how they think and behave. Children are supported through periods of distress with foster carers showing considerable resilience through these times.

Children are achieving and learning in education often above national averages. For example, some children have completed their GCSE's and are commencing further education. Supervising social workers and foster carers are strong advocates when children struggle with mainstream school. This means that suitable alternatives are secured. There are plenty of opportunities for children to learn new skills outside of school through a range of exciting hobbies and activities. This helps children to grow in confidence and develop ambition to succeed.

The manager and his team work hard to maintain placement stability with good effect. Children stay with foster carers for long periods which sees them through important transitions. Many children remain with carers into adulthood. During this time, they are well prepared for independence with children learning to drive and working in part time jobs. This creates opportunities for financial independence when young people leave home.

Prospective carers are thoroughly assessed in a timely way. Their strengths and vulnerabilities are well considered in terms of the children they can care for. New carers are warmly welcomed including those who transfer from other agencies. One carer spoke about how happy she is with her recent transition and support she has received so far. Established carers provided excellent feedback about the agency commenting on the high level of support and responsiveness provided. This helps to retain an experienced fostering community.

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

The manager has addressed the requirements from the last inspection. He has implemented new systems to ensure improved monitoring of serious incidents affecting children. Weekly safeguarding meetings are taking place where incidents are discussed, and any required actions can be completed. The records are presented in a helpful format which would enable any patterns and trends to be identified.

Overall, the agency's management of allegations has improved and there are clear outcomes recorded. Where allegations are unsubstantiated carers have worked through this difficult time with good support from the manager and staff. Where concerns have been upheld the agency has taken appropriate action to ensure children are safe. There have been two complaints about foster carers which were not reported to all relevant agencies. On these occasions, children's safety was not impacted by this.

Supervising social workers have a good understanding of risks posed to and from children. Risk management plans reflect this and are well written in a child centred way. There have been missed opportunities to demonstrate professional curiosity in terms of considering all possible risks for one child. Following inspection, managers acknowledged the importance of ensuring all social work staff increase their understanding in this area of practice.

Children are seen regularly by supervising social workers who spend time with them alone. As a result, children build trusted relationships and can share their worries. This increases opportunities for oversight of any difficulties in children's relationships with their carers which can be addressed in a timely way.

Foster carers receive training in how to manage children's behaviour. They use therapeutic parenting strategies to help children work through difficult feelings. When children become overwhelmed by a situation, where appropriate foster carers are trained to use physical interventions to keep children safe. The manager and training team have oversight of physical interventions so that any areas for development can be addressed through additional training and support.

Children rarely go missing from home, there have been no incidents in recent months. Where there have been missing incidents previously, carers have responded well, and children are returned home safely as quickly as possible. This minimises the risk of children being exploited.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

There is an experienced and knowledgeable manager who has integrity and high aspirations for children. The manager focuses on what is important such as ensuring strong relationships between foster carers and social workers, advocating for children's rights and ensuring children have the resources they need to live full and

active lives. His hard work enhances placement stability, and he is well respected by carers and social work staff.

The manager has established a stable and cohesive team. Staff work remotely however there are regular opportunities to meet up for team meetings and events. Team managers keep in regular contact with social workers and are available for support throughout the day and after hours. Staff are happy in their work and although they have had a temporary busier period managers have provided good support by taking on additional work themselves.

Staff benefit from regular and meaningful supervision. This includes detailed discussions about children focusing on their progress and vulnerabilities. The managers have begun to use a reflective model which is currently evolving in practice.

The manager ensures that staff receive regular training and development. Key areas such as safeguarding are revisited regularly, and staff receive the appropriate level to match their skills and experience. There is a user-friendly training platform in place where the manager and the training department can have oversight and ensure compliance of completing courses.

Supervising social workers provide foster carers with regular supervision however secondary carers are not attending regularly even when they are actively involved in children's care. This minimises opportunities to give them support and have oversight of their practice.

The agency listens to feedback from carers as part of their commitment to make improvements. One example has been changing the way in which activities are organised. As a result of this the agency has received more applications to foster.

The manager works well with external agencies challenging them effectively where shortfalls in practice arise. He also has a positive relationship with the fostering panel which makes well considered recommendations with proportionate action plans where needed. The panel makes a positive contribution to the quality of children's care.

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
<p>If any of the events in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table.</p> <p>Any notification made in accordance with this regulation which is given orally must be confirmed in writing.</p> <p>(Reg 36 (1)(2))</p>	<p>9 September 2024</p>

Recommendations

- Each approved foster carer (including a secondary carer) is supervised by a named, appropriately qualified social worker who has meetings with the foster carer. Meetings have a clear purpose and provide the opportunity to supervise the foster carer's work, ensure the foster carer is meeting the child's needs, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings, and offer support and a framework to assess the carer's performance and develop their competencies and skills. Foster carers' files include records of supervisory meetings. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 52, paragraph 21.8).
- The registered person should ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than necessarily confidential or third party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 43, paragraph 26.6).
- Children's safety and welfare is promoted in all fostering placements. Children are protected from abuse and other forms of significant harm (e.g. sexual or labour exploitation). (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards, page 14, paragraph 4.1)

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: 1244627

Registered provider: Fostering Solutions Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton, England BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: John Keane

Registered manager: David Rignall

Telephone number: 01832 274715

Inspectors

Laura Walker, social care inspector

Emma Dacres, 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

