

Fosterplus

Fosterplus Limited

Fosterplus Limited, Wavendon Tower, Ortensia Drive, Wavendon, Milton Keynes,
MK17 8LX

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Fosterplus is a privately owned independent fostering agency that is registered as a limited company. The registered office for the agency is located at Wavendon Business Park, Milton Keynes, and there is a sub-office in Stonehouse, Gloucestershire. The agency was registered with Ofsted on 8 February 2006.

The agency supports 43 fostering households, with whom 47 children, aged between 0 to 18 years, are placed.

There has been no registered manager in post since 8 August 2018.

Inspection dates: 18 to 22 March 2019

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	requires improvement to be good

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

Date of last inspection: 19 January 2016

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Most children live happily and thrive in secure long-term, well-planned placements. The manager has reviewed placement stability across all placements and is taking action to ensure this is the experience for all of the children.

Children enjoy a wide range of experiences provided by their foster carers and the agency. These are tailored to individual interests and abilities and, for many children, these provide new and memorable experiences. One child excels at ballroom dancing, while another child with highly complex needs demonstrates an exceptional ability in arts and craft.

A dedicated support worker ensures that children are provided with additional encouragement and support to nurture their emerging talents. This has resulted in a significant increase in children's confidence and self-worth. Involvement with local faith groups is promoted where children have expressed an interest, or where this is integral to the development of their individual identity.

Some children are making excellent progress from their starting points. Children enjoy excellent support from their foster carers to improve all aspects of their health. Foster carers proactively seek professional advice and advocate on behalf of children to good effect. A passionate and committed education support advisor supports foster carers to ensure that children's educational needs are addressed, in order that they achieve the best possible educational outcomes and are able to reach their full potential.

While placement stability is generally good, some matching has not been well evidenced, particularly for internal placement moves. Gaps are not always identified and, where they are, the actions to address these are not always carried out in a timely way. The lack of support to a foster carer's own child led to a highly inappropriate response to a child in placement and ultimately contributed to the breakdown of this placement. This has resulted in poor experiences for some children which mirror the abuse in their families of origin.

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

Staff and foster carers understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Referrals, where necessary, are made to the local authority designated officer. The agency works cooperatively with the local authority to investigate concerns and takes the actions necessary.

However, not all children have always felt safe and at ease living with their foster carers. Some children have had to leave placements because the care has not been good enough, or the foster carers were not kind. Where concerns have been identified, the agency has taken these seriously and has acted in a timely manner,

ensuring that children's views are heard.

Children know how to make a complaint and are clear that they have the opportunity to confidentially communicate any concerns they may have to the agency.

Foster carers benefit from a wide range of training that most use to inform their effective responses to, and management of, children's behaviour. Their understanding of attachment, along with the use of incentives and consequences, supports many children to learn how to regulate and express their emotions safely and in a socially acceptable way. Foster carers rarely have to hold children to keep them safe; when they do, this is in accordance with the model that they are trained in.

Recent work is noted on developing missing from care plans for all of the children in the care of the agency. There are very few instances of children going missing. Written risk management strategies are in place for other aspects of known risks and potentially harmful situations. Foster carers are mostly positive about this guidance which helps them to be proactive and responsive.

The application of a thorough recruitment process ensures that only those considered suitable are appointed as permanent employees. However, some gaps and omissions were noted in the recruitment files that were examined, relating to independent social workers, contracted directly or through an agency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

The agency has experienced turbulence during this inspection period, with a particular impact on the sub-office. Permanent staff, including a long-standing administrator have left, and the use of a series of locum supervising social workers became necessary. Some foster carers report that they have changed supervising social workers regularly. They describe 'fatigue' in relationship building because of having to repeat information to changing staff.

The manager has taken significant steps to address these issues and has devised strategies to improve the overall quality of the service. These are yet to be fully embedded within the organisation, although early indications suggest a positive impact.

There has been no manager registered with Ofsted since August 2018. The current manager, appointed in November 2018, did not fully understand the registration process but her application is now underway.

The instability of the staff team; particularly at the sub-office, has inhibited some of the foster carers' ability to form meaningful and trusting relationships with their supervising social workers. This has resulted in examples of insufficient knowledge and understanding of foster carers' strengths and weaknesses, and limited oversight

of the progress and well-being of some of the children in placement. At the time of this inspection, a new permanent member of staff had just started and a locum member of staff had been in post for a short period of time. Further recruitment is underway.

The quality and recording of staff supervision meetings have been variable. Staff have not always been provided with sufficient guidance, advice and support. Supervision meetings have been regular, but not always reflective. The manager has already identified this shortfall and taken steps to address this.

Agency staff undertake good quality assessments of prospective foster carers. Where independent assessors are used, their work is rigorously overseen. In one example, the assessment was halted and reallocated due to its poor quality. While this delayed the process, the emphasis was rightly focused on achieving a good quality assessment.

Panel processes are thorough. Panel members are robust in their approach to the scrutiny of the paperwork provided and appropriately identify areas for exploration. The panel chairperson is inclusive in her approach and sensitive in the way questions are asked of applicants, empowering them to make the best contribution possible.

Leaders and managers recognise the impact that the inconsistency of staff and managers has had on the quality of the service and take the concerns seriously. The newly appointed manager has worked relentlessly to minimise any further negative impact on children and their foster carers.

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>The fostering service must not—</p> <p>(a) employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p> <p>(3) For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—</p> <p>(a) is of integrity and good character;</p> <p>(b) has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform.</p> <p>(Regulation 20(1)(3)(a)(b))</p> <p>This relates specifically to the agency’s use of independent workers, to ensure that all gaps in employment are addressed and that interview notes specifically triangulate information gained during the recruitment processes.</p>	<p>30/09/2019</p>

Recommendations

- Ensure the fostering service only suggests foster carers to local authorities as a potential match for a child if the foster carer can reasonably be expected to meet the child's assessed needs and the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified, the fostering service should work with the responsible authority to ensure the placement plan sets out any additional training, resource or support required. (Fostering Services: National Minimum Standard', 15.1)

In particular, provide secure evidence of the matching process.

- All foster carers have access to adequate social work and other professional support, information and advice, to enable them to provide consistent, high

quality care to the child. This includes assistance with dealing with relevant services, such as health and education. Consideration is given to any help or support needed by the sons and daughters of foster carers. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', 21.6)

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: SC065614

Registered provider: Fosterplus Limited

Registered provider address: Fosterplus Limited, Wavendon Tower, Ortensia Drive, Wavendon, Milton Keynes, MK17 8LX

Responsible individual: Joanne August

Registered manager: Post vacant

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Inspectors:

Jacqueline Georghiou, social care inspector
Maire Atherton, social care inspector



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