

Fosterplus

Fosterplus Limited

Jubilee House, 31–33 Meadow Lane, Long Eaton, Nottingham NG10 2FE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This agency has been registered since 2008. It is owned by a private company. It offers a range of placements for children. These placements include respite, bridging, emergency, long- and short-term and permanency. The agency also supports foster carers to provide placements for sanctuary seeking children. At the time of this inspection, 53 children were being cared for within 44 fostering households.

Inspection dates: 9 to 13 May 2022

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: 23 July 2018

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Overall, children cared for within this agency make good progress and go on to build positive relationships with their foster carers. Foster carers who care for sibling groups have worked hard to strengthen their sibling bonds. When siblings cannot live together, some foster carers have made considerable effort to ensure that siblings can spend time together regularly in a way that feels comfortable. For example, one child's sibling regularly spends time in their home. Another child communicates with their sibling regularly via their online console game.

Children's cultural needs are identified and considered at the beginning, when deciding which family a child may wish to live with. One child was able to live with an Eritrean family that could speak the child's language and share cultural practices. Although some foster carers are caring for children who do not share the same heritage, there is strong evidence of foster carers developing themselves to better meet children's cultural needs. For example, one foster carer placed sweets outside a child's bedroom door on Christmas Eve and decorated two Christmas trees so that they could be decorated in line with each country's tradition. This meant a lot to the children.

All children have a school placement. Children make progress and attend extra-curricular activities. Foster carers recognise that friendships are important for children, and these are supported outside of school. The agency has a specialist education officer to monitor and track children's progress and achievement in education. The agency rewards children through vouchers and written praise to recognise any achievements that they make, both inside and outside of school.

There is one child who communicates non-verbally. This child's placement is under some strain because a suitable respite package is not yet in place to adequately support the foster carers. The child is on a reduced education timetable. This puts further strain on the placement because foster carers have less opportunity to have a break and build their resilience. Although multi-agency meetings take place regularly, this situation has drifted.

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

There have been some strong examples of foster carers supporting children to take managed risks in accordance with their age and development. Children are given the opportunities to make mistakes and to learn from them. For example, where appropriate, children are encouraged to use public transport and to try new activities.

Risk-taking behaviours for two children significantly reduced because their foster carers were supportive of their friendships and relationships. The foster carers encourage friends to meet at the house and to stay for dinner. This has resulted in

the children no longer going missing from the home because they like where they live.

When children have gone missing, there has been a clear response from carers and the agency to ensure their safe return. The documents used by the agency when a child goes missing do not currently include a recent photo of each child. They also do not include clear details as to where children may go missing to, or their known contacts. These additions would further assist carers and the police in securing the safe return of children.

Risk assessments for children include sufficient information to assist carers. There is positive evidence of children's actual or potential risks reducing since moving to live with their foster carers. Children themselves report feeling safe and protected from harm. They know how to make a complaint or raise any concerns they may have. Carers use de-escalation strategies to good effect when children are struggling with their emotions and feelings.

However, when children make allegations or raise complaints about their foster carers, these are not consistently recorded on children's files. This is necessary so that children can review their files and find out what actions the agency took to protect them. Additionally, more could be done to capture the wishes and feelings of any children who expresses themselves non-verbally.

When children are in receipt of disability benefit, the fostering agency does not yet have guidance in place which specifies how foster carers will be supported to manage this money on the child's behalf.

Staff recruitment practices are robust and prevent unsuitable adults from working with vulnerable children. Improvements have been made to the recording and checking of information since the last inspection, when a recommendation was made. This recommendation has been fully met.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The registered manager is established and knowledgeable and she knows the needs of the foster carers and their children in detail. The supervising social workers describe the manager's leadership style as child-focused and personable. Wider professionals within the organisation regularly communicate with the manager and they hold her expertise and experience in high regard.

The fostering panel is well organised. There is an experienced panel chair and panel members have a wealth of expertise that they bring to their role. The appraisals of panel members are up to date, they have received relevant training and have been supported to understand learning from recent serious case reviews. Fostering assessments are to a good standard and the recruitment of new foster carers remains steady.

Although foster carers provide agency feedback for their annual reviews, more could be done to capture the views of foster carers throughout the year. When foster carers have their annual review, all children within the family are provided with feedback forms. This is positive; however, more could be done to ensure that children's feedback is supported by a person who is not their foster carer, to ensure that children are given the opportunity to share their views freely.

Overall, foster carers are very positive about the support and supervision that they are offered by the fostering agency. Supervisions happen regularly and foster carers have access to a wide range of training resources. Foster carers describe the out-of-hours service as helpful and responsive. Wider professionals are also positive about the quality of care being provided to children.

However, supervisions do not yet evidence reflective practice. Also, the training needs of foster carers are not yet well tracked or reviewed. This is necessary to ensure that foster carers are upskilled to meet the needs of the children in their care. These areas of development have been acknowledged by the manager and steps are being made to try and address this.

A child participation officer has recently joined the team and they have started to meet with children regularly to support them with any transitions that they may be going through. Since the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic have been reviewed, the agency has focused on their child participation. This year, children have attended a trampolining event and staff and children have taken part in a virtual play dough modelling competition. This is because one child likes play dough and suggested that this might be a good idea.

The social work team is consistent, and levels of staff turnover are low. Foster carers tend to have the same supervising social worker for several years. Supervising social workers have regular supervision and attend monthly team meetings. This is good for team morale.

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 registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times, and</p> <p>before making any decision affecting a child placed or to be placed with a foster parent due consideration is given to the child’s—</p> <p>wishes and feelings (having regard to the child’s age and understanding), and</p> <p>religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.</p> <p>(Regulation 11 (a)(b)(i)(ii))</p> <p>When children have disabilities or barriers to verbal communication, every effort must be made to ensure that their wishes and feelings are recorded and responded to.</p> <p>It is necessary for foster carers to be provided with regular breaks to ensure that their well-being is prioritised.</p> <p>When children and foster carers are not being provided with vital services, this matter needs to be escalated to ensure that services are provided to reduce the risk of placement breakdown.</p> <p>When children provide feedback for their foster carer’s review, every effort should be made to ensure that foster carers do not complete this with children.</p>	<p>15 July 2022</p>

Recommendations

- Foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience.

Supervision documents should evidence reflective practice. Training plans should be live documents and revisited in accordance with children's needs.

Where foster carers' mandatory training is out of date, this needs to be monitored and reviewed.

The agency could make further efforts to engage with foster carers about any ideas that they may have to improve the support being offered.

(‘Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards’, 20.5)

- Where a child is eligible for benefits as a result of a disability, foster carers are encouraged to apply for those benefits. There are regular recorded discussions about how any additional benefits are being spent to promote the best interests of the child.

(‘Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards’, 28.9)

- Children understand how their views have been taken into account and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why.

(‘Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards’, 1.2)

When children make allegations or complaints, or are involved in behavioural incidents, these must be consistently recorded in children's files. The care and support provided to children, minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing.

- The care and support provided to children, minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing.

(‘Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards’, 5.1)

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: SC384584

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Responsible individual: Joanne August

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Inspectors

Andi Lilley-Tams, Social Care Inspector
Tracy Murty, Social Care Inspector

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