

Familyplacement.com

Family Placement.com Limited
Premier House, 85 High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6HY
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Familyplacement.com is an independent fostering agency providing emergency, short- and long-term placements for children of all ages. The service recruits, approves and supports a range of carers including parent and child carers and carers for children with disabilities. The agency covers a wide geographical area and the administrative base is in Witney, Oxfordshire. There is also a small office in Hampshire and supervising social workers are deployed there to offer local support to groups of children and carers. At the time of the inspection, there were 97 fostering households caring for 126 children.

Inspection dates: 13 to 17 August 2018

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: 25 November 2014

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- The right children are matched with the right people at the right time.
- The vast majority of children are in stable and long-term care arrangements. This is underpinned by good support to carers and children from supervising social workers and managers at all levels.
- Leaders and managers have a clear ethos of putting children first and offering 'local care for local children'. This permeates throughout the whole agency and has remained evident throughout a period of planned, sustainable growth in volume of service since the last inspection.
- Children's everyday experiences are rich and varied, including those who have disabilities.
- Children have the lived experience of an extended family because of a system of 'back-up' carers whom they know well.
- Children are listened to and are fully involved in decisions about their lives in a way that is meaningful to them.
- Children are kept safe because they have positive relationships with their carers that create an environment of trust. They are supported to become emotionally independent.
- Carers benefit from a detailed training programme and psychological support that provides them with insight and practical guidance. This subsequently benefits children.
- Leaders and managers prepare children for key transitions such as staying put and changes of school with meticulous planning in advance and good partnership planning.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Managers could be more proactive in ascertaining the results of child protection investigations by local authority social workers.
- Given the large geographical area that the agency covers, managers are well positioned to add greater intelligence to the wider safeguarding community through information sharing and research.

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

Recommendations

- Ensure that the fostering service works effectively in partnership with other agencies concerned with child protection, e.g. the responsible authority, schools, hospitals, general practitioners, etc. and does not work in isolation from them. (NMS 4.7) In particular, be more proactive in seeking conclusions from local authority child protection investigations in a timely way.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Good-quality care and support make a difference to children's lives in a positive way. There are clear examples of how regular support and well-considered and detailed training programmes are put into practice and impact positively on children's lived experience.

There are warm and loving relationships between carers and children. This results in children having confidence to try new things, adapting from previous neglect and caring roles, and flourishing. Children are given a rich and varied life, including new and challenging experiences.

Psychological support adds value to the stability and permanence of children with carers. Stability is a core value of this agency and is evident throughout every level of the organisation.

Carers advocate well for children and are supported to do so at the appropriate managerial level.

One local authority social worker commented that progress for a child with developmental delay has been 'rapid and enormous'.

Children are listened to in a meaningful way at a level that is important to them. Children were noted to have influenced: choice over which school they attended; a move to a house that has riding stables nearby; and to have greater control over difficult contact visits with family.

The broader participation work has some room for development in terms of being able to capture the impact it has. However, the 'say and play' and children's council sessions give children the opportunity to look at themes that mean something to them and their day-to-day experiences.

Preparation for moving children on is considered carefully and the new work on preparation for independence is focused clearly on the young person being able to see for themselves what they need to work on, including emotional support. When children move because of adoption, this is managed well, and their experience is a positive one. When circumstances dictate that children must move because of safeguarding issues, this is done thoughtfully and with a focus on minimising disruption.

The right carers are recruited at the right time for the right children. Recruitment, assessment and matching are timely but professionally secure. A process where long-term placements have to return to panel for a change in approval has added a further level of confidence that this is the right arrangement for children.

Staying put arrangements for young people who reach 18 years are considered well

in advance and negotiated to ensure minimal disruption to children, for example avoiding exam times and other key significant anniversaries.

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

Safeguarding arrangements meet all the statutory requirements and are put into practice effectively. When concerns over standards of care, complaints and significant incidents occur they are responded to in an appropriate way, resulting in safe outcomes for children. In one case, the conclusion of a local authority investigation was not chased up quickly enough, resulting in uncertainty for a carer and their family. In this case, no children were left at risk.

When children and young people go missing, there is a clear protocol that carers understand and follow, with good out-of-hours advice and guidance also available on how to proceed.

Children are kept safe because they have positive relationships with their carers. Children are helped to manage their behaviour because of targeted and meaningful training and support that includes a clear focus on attachment and positive relationships. Accordingly, children know who they can talk to about their worries and past experiences and disclosures are handled sensitively with the right amount of support at the child's pace.

There is no restraint and children, including those who have disabilities, are not restricted to keep them safe. Instead, they are given room to test out how to manage risk for themselves within safe boundaries.

Foster carers are aware of the risks posed by the internet and have support to understand these risks. There is scope to further enhance the confidence of carers in the digital age so that they can present the positive use of the internet as well as the dangers.

Carers, staff and those that have significant contact with children are vetted and checked with rigour and assessments identify potential areas of concern that are tested by further scrutiny and analysis by the panel, the psychologist and the manager where appropriate.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The agency clearly achieves its stated aims and objectives.

Leaders and managers have a vision of keeping children local to their home whenever possible. This ethos is apparent throughout the organisation and is a key driver for social workers and those involved in matching.

Leaders expect high standards from staff and carers and these are delivered consistently.

Children's needs and views are prioritised at all times. Requests to managers for

additional resources and training are responded to quickly and decisions are made that are in the best interests of children, even when situations are complex.

Supervision of staff is regular and of a high quality. Caseloads are deliberately low so that practitioners have enough time to reflect and learn.

Supervision of carers is frequent, both formally and informally, and includes both practical and forward-looking discussions that are focused on the children as well as supporting carers.

All staff and carers spoken to report that they feel valued, supported, prepared and are proud to work for this agency. This is reflected in retention rates of staff and carers and a stable workforce that understands the vision for children. For new staff, induction is impressive and sets the scene for high-quality social work.

The managers and leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the agency very well and are meticulous in tracking compliance, identifying areas for sustainable growth and succession. The improvement plan identifies areas that are common to the ethos of the agency and that are both achievable and add value to the experience of children. Where some areas are underdeveloped, there is a plan for how to address these issues.

An outcomes tracker system is being used effectively in individual reviews to give a clearer picture of how children have made progress from their starting points. This is in its early stages but has the potential to fully reflect the achievements of children and to identify trends.

Feedback from other professionals is largely positive.

The quality assurance of practice and compliance with regulatory requirements is comprehensive. Senior leaders could further develop a mechanism for detailed audit of the quality of social work practice that includes a feedback loop to both permanent staff and independent social workers.

Panel membership is wide, increasingly diverse and brings a wealth of experience and viewpoints.

Leaders and managers challenge other agencies when information and services that children need are not provided in a timely way.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the

independent fostering agency knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC033478

Registered provider: Family Placement.com Limited

Registered provider address: 85 High Street, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6HY

Responsible individual: Andrew Clipson-Boyles

Registered manager: Post vacant (application received)

Telephone number: 01993 706925

Email address: info@familyplacement.com

Inspector

Steve Lowe, Her Majesty's Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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