

Ryancare Fostering Ltd

Ryancare Fostering Limited

5a Wellington Road, Wanstead, London E11 2AN

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

Ryancare Fostering Limited is an independent fostering agency based in Wanstead, East London. The service has been in operation since 2002. It is one of a number of fostering agencies owned and managed by the National Fostering Group, having been acquired in 2019.

The fostering service specialises in providing foster care for individual children and sibling groups. They provide emergency, respite and short-term and long-term placements. The agency also provides parent and child placements.

At the time of the inspection, the fostering service provided care for 27 children in 20 approved fostering households. Four young adults are living in 'staying put' arrangements.

Inspection dates: 20 to 24 June 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: 26 February 2018

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 thrive in nurturing, life-enriching fostering placements. All children spoken to scored their carer '10 out of 10'. Children's social workers describe foster carers as 'amazing' and 'fantastic'. A parent also praised foster carers, saying, 'Without them I would not know where I would be.'

Foster carers and leaders and managers proudly call fostered children 'our children'. Children have a sense of belonging and they feel part of a family. Some children fondly call their foster carers 'mummy and daddy'.

Foster carers and staff strongly advocate for children's needs. A parent who was in foster care with their child also welcomed the information and support that they received from the supervising social worker. Staff carefully match children with foster carers who can meet their needs.

Children benefit from the personalised care and attention given to them. Every time supervising social workers see children they write a personalised letter to them. This positively contributes to each child's life story. Children have an opportunity to visit their carers before they move in. When this is not possible, they have a video call with the foster carers and they receive photos and information about the foster carers' household.

Children are able to live with foster carers who share their culture, religion or ethnicity. This enables children to practice their faith and observe their traditions. Positive examples were seen of children celebrating Eid, fasting during Ramadan and attending the mosque.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have the opportunity to meet as a group. A recent meeting was held with a refugee council, which helped them further understand the immigration process and their rights. They also benefit from essential information being translated into their first language and support from an interpreter.

Leaders and managers monitor children's progress effectively. The achievements of children and foster carers are also celebrated special ceremonies. A child proudly told of their joy in receiving a certificate, trophy and medal.

Foster carers provide effective support for parent and child placements and they also care for babies who are separated from their parents. However, foster carers have not attended recent specific training on parent and child placements or caring for a baby. This training would provide them with up-to-date guidance, which would further assist them in their role.

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

Children benefit from good safeguarding arrangements. Social workers praise the help and stability foster carers give to children. A placing social worker stated this was 'the best placement' for a child who had been at high risk of exploitation.

The agency is child-centred. Children know how to make a complaint and they are able to share their views through a range of processes. The introduction of the 'youth voice' and exit interviews are positive examples of listening to children to further improve the agency.

Leaders and managers regularly monitor the stability of each placement. This ensures issues are swiftly addressed and relevant support is provided for each child. Children benefit from the strong partnership working with placing authorities. Supervising social workers attend children's statutory meetings and joint visits are also requested.

The agency was managed effectively throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Foster carers and staff were provided with personal protective equipment, virtual meetings were held and online training increased. Foster carers and children were also able to attend an outdoor event in the summer. A staff member said, 'Everyone's health and well-being were prioritised.'

Foster carers are skilled at caring for children with complex needs. They recognise children's progress and achievements. A foster carer proudly described a child as 'going from strength to strength'.

Children's risks are identified, understood and successfully managed. Children do not go missing from care and there are no concerns in relation to children being at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation. Children benefit from consistent boundaries, which helps them to develop their social skills.

Foster carers and staff benefit from a wide range of safeguarding training. This has raised their awareness of issues relating to female genital mutilation, child exploitation and preventing radicalisation. Foster carer training also includes building resilience and raising awareness of racism and discrimination.

Safeguarding is highly prioritised within the agency. Safeguarding of children is regularly discussed during foster carers' and staff's supervisions and team meetings. The agency's practice is research-based and they also learn lessons from standards of care concerns and safeguarding incidents, which further increases children's welfare and safety.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Foster carers and staff appreciate that the agency is small. They said, 'It is like a family.' The culturally diverse staff team works creatively to meet the agency's

objectives and provide a supportive environment for children and foster carers to grow and develop.

The agency has been acquired by a larger organisation. However, it has maintained its unique identity. Being part of a large organisation has brought with it additional resources. The agency has still to make full use of the wide range of support available for children and foster carers.

Foster carers receive a good level of support. They benefit from regular support groups and supervisory visits. In addition to this, they have access to a counselling service, a quarterly agency newsletter, an out-of-hours service and ongoing training.

Foster carers appreciate the thoughtfulness and generosity of the agency. Children receive vouchers for religious festivals or to celebrate achievements. Foster families also benefit from the schemes, which offer them discounts with shopping, activities and useful services.

The agency encourages foster carers to get involved in the running of the agency, for example, helping with foster carer recruitment and mentoring new foster carers. There are plans for foster carers to form a consultation group, which will enable them to have a more influential role within the agency.

Children benefit from a consistent and reflective fostering panel which is chaired by a highly experienced therapist. Although the fostering panel consists of professionals from a range of backgrounds, it could be further strengthened with a representative from children's health. The panel and the agency decision-maker provide clear, child-focused decision-making and they contribute positively to the development of the agency.

The agency benefits from highly experienced supervising social workers. Foster carers appreciate the administrative team, who they describe as 'really helpful and responsive'. Staff feel valued and they benefit from ongoing training, regular supervision and the introduction of a four-day week. The only shortfall identified was in relation to the agency not keeping a record of all staff's induction.

The quality of care is regularly monitored and there is a focus on continual improvement. The agency collates feedback from placing authorities, which includes numerous compliments. However, this information is not included, as required, in the quality of care reports. This is a missed opportunity to highlight the positive feedback the agency receives.

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 provider must ensure that all persons employed by them receive appropriate training. (Regulation 21 (4)(a))</p> <p>In particular, ensure there is a written record of staff inductions.</p>	21 August 2022
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with the placing authority. (Regulation 35 (1) (3))</p> <p>In particular, ensure that the report reflects the feedback provided by the placing authorities.</p>	21 August 2022

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure fostering panels have access to medical expertise. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 14.6)
- The registered person should ensure foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service, in particular, in relation to training for parent and child placements and caring for a baby. ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.4)

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: SC041354

Registered provider: Ryancare Fostering Limited

Registered provider address: 41 Stone Street, Faversham, Kent ME13 8PH

Responsible individual: James Flanagan

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Inspectors

Sharon Payne, Social Care Inspector

Victoria Jones, Social Care Inspector

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