

Enhanced Foster Care

Enhanced Foster Care Limited

Boreham Mill, Bishopstrow, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9HQ

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

This is a private limited company. This fostering agency provides a range of placements for children and young people needing short-, medium- and longer-term care. The agency currently has 67 carers in 35 fostering households caring for 40 children.

The fostering agency registered with Ofsted in 2007. It has offices in Warminster, Wiltshire, and in Newton Abbot, Devon.

Inspection dates: 21 to 25 January 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 **good**

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

Date of last inspection: 2 December 2015

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Enforcement action since last inspection: none

Key findings from this inspection

This independent fostering agency is good because:

- Children make good progress from their starting points and feel part of a wider family.
- The agency employs highly experienced and committed members of staff.
- The assessment of new carers is thoughtfully carried out, and the panel ensures effective scrutiny of all applications.
- Carers feel exceptionally valued and well supported. As a result, children receive high levels of good-quality care.
- Children are protected, as safeguarding processes are managed well, with thorough recording of outcomes.
- Management oversight is effective and leads to improvement within the agency.

The independent fostering agency's areas for development:

- Recruitment processes for panel members are not strong enough. This is because gaps in employment history are not always checked and verified.
- Some children have not had return home interviews following incidents when they have been missing from home. Although leaders and managers have raised this weakness with placing authorities, they have not escalated their concerns about this lack of provision.
- The fostering panel does not include members from diverse backgrounds. This lack of range of experience and viewpoint may affect the quality of decision-making.

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>Ensure the fostering service provider does not employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20(1)(a), (3))</p> <p>In particular, the agency must ensure that it obtains a full employment history for all staff and verify any gaps.</p>	28/02/2019

Recommendations

- Where children placed out of authority go missing, the manager of the fostering service follows the local RMFHC protocol. They also comply with, and make foster carers aware of, any other processes required by the responsible authority, specified in the individual child's care plan and in the RMFHC protocol covering the authority responsible for the child's care. (National minimum standards 5.7)
- The number, skills, knowledge and experience of persons on the central list are sufficient to enable the fostering service to constitute panels that are equipped to make competent recommendations to the fostering service provider, taking into account the nature of the children and carers that the service caters for. (National minimum standards 14.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children make good progress with their behaviour and education. Leaders and managers monitor children's progress effectively and can identify the achievements and developments that they make. For example, one child has received coordinated and meaningful multi-agency support to reduce the risk of exploitation and make progress with reducing aggressive behaviours. In addition, this child has achieved above-average education attainment because of the encouragement and care that she is receiving.

Carers have established warm and nurturing relationships with children. Carers ensure that children feel welcome and 'part of the family'. For example, children can contribute to decisions about where to go on holiday and are encouraged to have their friends from school to visit for tea and have sleepovers.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities and experiences that are fun and help to build their confidence. Some children have enjoyed catamaran trips, while others have visited Portugal, Greece and Edinburgh. These experiences positively benefit children.

Supervising social workers and carers work hard to consult children to understand their wishes and feelings. Children have a say about the events organised by the agency and have enjoyed many social activities, including 'have your say days', arts and crafts, pantomime trips, Christmas and Easter parties and days out at local theme and wildlife parks. Memory boxes are maintained to capture the children's experiences and successes. This good work helps children to remember early life events and to preserve positive experiences.

The agency's staff have thorough and well-organised processes in place to make sure that children live with carers who can meet their needs. Staff work hard to make sure that information relating to risks and challenging behaviours is accurate and understood. Children receive plenty of information and personalised books about their carers before moving in, and are enabled to visit their potential carers for tea visits and overnight stays. This approach helps to reduce children's worries.

The carers are pleased with the support and guidance that they receive from the agency. Children also provided very positive feedback about the quality of care they receive from carers.

One carer said, 'They advocated on our behalf, and that was so helpful. The social events are great, and they have worked so hard to include us as carers.' Carers appreciate being part of the social committee and feel involved about decisions that are made about activities, fun days and gatherings. They feel that they belong to part of a wider family and that their experiences and skills are valued.

The supervising social workers make sure that supervision takes place regularly and is of a good quality. Where training needs are identified, for example after an allegation, they are followed up swiftly and discussed in supervision sessions. As a result, carers feel confident and equipped to manage the complex needs of children in their care.

Some children have moved on because they returned to family, were ready to live independently or because foster carers could not meet their challenging needs. The agency closely reviews placement endings, including the small number of unplanned endings, with placing authorities. Managers use reflection sessions to consider any lessons that can be learned from unplanned endings. This reflective work helps to improve the quality of care provided to children and to maintain placement stability, where possible.

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

Children feel safe living with their carers and know how to raise concerns. When children make allegations, these are responded to appropriately and within required timescales. The supervising social workers both make sure that children feel listened to and record their wishes and feelings in detail. Supervising social workers advocate powerfully on behalf of children so that they can speak to their social worker or somebody independent about any worries that they may have.

Managers make sure that there is close partnership working with placing authorities in the interests of protecting children, even when placing authorities are some distance away. The designated officer is contacted about all allegations or concerns about foster carers. He speaks very positively about the working relationship with managers at the agency. Incidents are well managed, with thorough and well-organised recording processes in place. Outcomes and follow-up actions are reviewed to ensure that risk assessments and safe caring plans are up to date.

Children are kept safe, because foster carers undergo thorough assessment and review processes by curious and highly skilled supervising social workers. Frequent, unannounced visits take place by supervising social workers to ensure that children are being well cared for in a safe and secure home. Well-written care plans and behaviour management plans enable carers to reduce risks and children's challenging behaviours. Visits take place by supervising social workers frequently throughout the year, as well as thorough yearly reviews to panel. This ensures that children's homes remain a safe environment for them to live in.

Children who run away or who are at risk of sexual exploitation have clear risk management plans in place to help to reduce these behaviours. Carers receive detailed training about sexual exploitation and radicalisation to help them to keep children safe. When children go missing, staff support carers to ensure that children are returned home as swiftly as possible.

Staff have close oversight of incidents when children go missing so that police and social workers are notified, and children's safety plans are followed. Despite challenge by managers of the placing authorities, some children have not received

return home interviews. Staff undertake internal reviews of 'missing' incidents, but have not escalated the lack of return home interviews within the placing authority. As a result, some children have not been given the opportunity to talk with somebody independent about how they feel or why they run away.

Foster carers manage children's challenging behaviour very well. The agency's 'trauma recovery' model is used well and provides therapeutic and psychological support to foster carers from a range of specialist practitioners. This enables foster carers to understand children and help them with their behaviours. There have been no incidents of physical restraint since the last inspection. This is because the behaviour management approach is to distract children and reduce issues before they arise.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Since the last inspection in 2015, there has been considerable change within the organisation. Two registered managers have left the role since the last inspection. The most recent manager is now the deputy manager of the agency. He has significant knowledge of the agency, children and carers, as well as a strong understanding of fostering procedures. Several supervising social workers have moved on and some foster carers have also left. However, the responsible individual, panel chair, deputy manager and other experienced staff have maintained the consistency and quality of care of the service.

An established and respected manager from within the organisation has been recruited and has applied to register with Ofsted. A group director has also been recruited since the last inspection. He has extensive management experience and skills within education. He is passionate about improving outcomes for children looked after. All staff speak positively about the responsible individual. She is actively involved in the agency, and is described as approachable and extremely child centred.

A well-written and strong statement of purpose enables staff, parents, placing authorities and foster carers to understand the standards of care expected, as well as what the agency aims to contribute to the lives of children. Children learn about their rights and how to raise a concern or complaint through a variety of age-appropriate and accessible children's guides.

In the last 12 months, a highly experienced and very skilled agency decision-maker has also been recruited. She has improved the quality assurance processes and has clear targets to drive improvement on the agency panel.

The panel is well organised, and minutes of panel meetings are of a very good quality. However, the panel does not have members from diverse or minority backgrounds. There are no adults who have previously been looked after, for example. While action is being taken to address this, it could mean that certain issues are overlooked in the decision-making process.

Staff enjoy working at the agency. They feel supported by the managers and admire the 'children first' ethos of the organisation. They feel able to share any concerns or views that they have in an open and professional manner. Staff receive regular good-quality, external supervision from a highly knowledgeable and experienced practitioner.

Managers make sure that carers complete all mandatory and specialist training to enable them to provide children with good-quality care.

Managers have ensured that the recommendations from the last inspection have been met. Recruitment processes are well organised and are generally thorough in terms of carrying out checks. However, panel members' files sampled during this inspection were found to have gaps in employment history. In addition, these gaps had not been properly verified by managers.

Leaders and managers understand how the agency is performing and how well children are progressing. They review an extensive range of data to enable them to evaluate how effectively children are kept safe and to tailor the quality of care to their individual needs. Because of leaders' and managers' monitoring, action has been taken to improve the quality of decision-making at panel and to enhance the package of therapeutic care provided to children and carers.

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 difference 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: SC360287

Registered provider: Enhanced Foster Care Limited

Registered provider address: 4 Cedar Park, Cobham Road, Ferndown Industrial Estate, Wimborne BH21 7SF

Responsible individual: Joanne Sams

Registered manager: Post vacant

Telephone number: 01985 218505

Email address: theoffice@enhancedfostercare.co.uk

Inspectors

Anna Gravelle, social care inspector

Heather Chaplin, social care 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
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