

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 fostering agency provides placements for children and young people needing short- to long-term care. There are currently 23 fostering households registered with the agency.

The agency registered with Ofsted in 2007. In 2020, while retaining its own registration, the agency was acquired by the Outcomes First Group.

A new manager is in post. They registered with Ofsted on 25 August 2022. They have previously managed this agency.

Inspection dates: 26 to 29 September 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 requires improvement to be good

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

Date of last inspection: 21 January 2019

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 make good progress in all areas of their lives. Most children are very settled, and some children continue to live with their foster carers when they reach 18 and into early adulthood. They are very much part of their foster carer's family, and many children develop stable and trusting relationships with their foster carers. These relationships form the basis from which children make progress.

Children's educational needs are valued. All children attend an educational provision, and their personal education plans are reviewed regularly. Supervising social workers and foster carers act as strong advocates for children to ensure that their educational needs are met. Many children are reported to be making very good progress educationally, and some children have progressed on to college and university.

This agency provides individualised support for children and carers. Supervising social workers provide support in a timely way. This is led by the needs of foster carers and children. In addition, supervising social workers forge links with partner agencies to ensure that support around the child is comprehensive.

Children's views are gathered to inform their care planning. This includes the careful consideration of children's views, and their needs, when assessing the suitability of respite carers. At other times, children's views are not represented well. This includes their participation in the recruitment of foster carers and gathering their views to influence improvement in the agency.

Foster carers ensure that children attend a range of activities in their community. Many of these activities promote children's physical health, emotional well-being and social development. However, support groups facilitated by the agency to strengthen networking for foster carers and children are limited. The manager told inspectors that despite attempts to facilitate more support groups, the uptake from foster carers is low.

Foster carers create meaningful memory boxes for children to support their understanding of their life journey. Specialist external support, such as life-story work, is not always provided in line with the child's needs or in a timely way. For some children, this has had a negative impact on their emotional well-being. The manager told inspectors that the agency is considering ways to address this.

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

When safeguarding incidents occur, there is a strong and proactive response from the agency. For example, visits are increased and specialist multi-agency

interventions are coordinated. Preventative approaches that reduce risk before incidents occur are less evident across records.

Safer care plans and risk assessments are individualised and detailed. They provide clear guidance to foster carers about what to do to help keep children safe. They are updated regularly to reflect current circumstances and levels of risk.

Recruitment processes ensure that staff employed by the agency are suitable. The agency has taken sufficient action to address the requirement made at the previous inspection relating to the recruitment of staff.

When complaints are raised, the agency responds effectively to investigate and resolve matters promptly. Any areas for learning are identified and acted on to improve the quality of care that children receive.

Allegations are responded to swiftly and efficiently. This includes the appropriate sharing of information with external agencies as part of safeguarding processes. Investigations are thorough and learning has helped to prevent further incidents occurring.

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

In 2020, the agency was acquired by a larger organisation. Feedback from the manager and staff indicates that they are positive about this change, including the opportunity to increase support to foster carers and children. Feedback provided from foster carers and other professionals relating to this change is mixed.

The agency decision-maker is experienced and provides a rigorous quality assurance function that improves standards. Annual review assessments detail the standard of care the child receives. The panel identifies gaps in learning and knowledge of foster carers that feed into development plans effectively.

Leaders and managers have monitoring processes in place to aid management oversight. The use of data is not always analysed to identify patterns and trends to inform development plans that seek to improve the experiences and care of children. This includes identifying areas for learning and development relating to care arrangements that end in an unplanned way.

The agency does not ensure that all carers have up-to-date training. This includes training that ensures foster carers know how to keep children safe, such as paediatric first-aid training. In addition, carers who support young people over the age of 18 do not have the relevant training relating to adult safeguarding.

Supervising social workers regularly visit foster carers, and records are up to date. Inspectors found that records do not reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated by staff during discussions. Records lack detail and management oversight to ensure that interventions used help foster carers meet the complex needs of children.

Leaders and managers ensure that staff receive regular supervision and support. This includes formal supervision, team meetings and annual appraisals. However, records do not demonstrate the challenge and reflection that are needed to drive improvement across practice.

Leaders and managers have taken action to address the requirement and recommendations made at the previous inspection.

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 provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them.</p> <p>The fostering service provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that foster parents are familiar with, and act in accordance with the policies established in accordance with regulations 12 (1) and 13 (1) and (3).</p> <p>The fostering service provider must ensure that, in relation to any child placed or to be placed with a foster parent, the foster parent is given such information, which is kept up to date, as to enable him to provide appropriate care for the child, and in particular that each foster parent is provided with a copy of the most recent version of the child's care plan provided to the fostering service provider under regulation 6 (3)(d) of the Care Planning Regulations. (Regulation 17 (1) (2) (3)).</p> <p>In particular, the registered person must ensure that all members of the fostering household are provided with training that is kept up to date to ensure that children and young people are cared for safely and in line with their needs.</p>	<p>25 November 2022</p>

Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure regular monitoring of all records is kept by the service to ensure compliance with the agency's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action should be taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. This relates to the manager reviewing records to ensure that foster carers receive high-quality support. In addition, data should be analysed to identify patterns and trends to inform the agency's improvement plans. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 25.2).
- The registered person should ensure that peer support, foster care associations and/or self-help groups for foster carers are encouraged and supported. This relates to the manager ensuring that foster carers and children are fully involved in the agency's development, including foster carer recruitment, groups and activities. ('Fostering Services: national minimum standards', 21.4).

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: SC360287

Registered provider: Enhanced Foster Care Limited

Registered provider address: Atria, Spa Road, Bolton BL1 4AG

Responsible individual: Catherine Rioda

Registered manager: Paul Woakes

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Inspectors

Louise Bacon, Social Care Inspector

Penelope Kutz, Social Care Inspector

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