

# Reach-Out Care

Reach-Out Care Limited

Jordan House, Forster Business Centre, Finchale Road, Framwellgate Moor, County Durham DH1 5HL

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this independent fostering agency

The agency has been registered with Ofsted since October 2003.

The agency offers a range of foster placements, including respite, permanent, long term, short term and parent and child arrangements. At the time of this inspection, the agency had 85 fostering households providing care for 132 children and young people from several placing local authorities.

The manager registered with Ofsted in June 2020.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

### Inspection dates: 19 to 23 June 2023

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account** **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The independent fostering agency provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the independent fostering agency contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Date of last inspection:** 23 July 2018

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Enforcement action since last inspection:** none

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Children develop a significant sense of belonging in secure fostering families. The agency supports carers to provide permanence for the children in their care. All children who have turned 18 years old in the past year have chosen to remain living with their foster carers under 'staying put' arrangements. One child said, 'I feel part of the family.' Another child said that they see their foster carer as their 'mam'. This reflects the strong sense of belonging felt by children and young people in their foster families.

When children receive respite care, the agency strives to ensure that children stay with the same foster carers. These are often referred to as 'sleepovers'. This helps to further embed the children's sense of belonging to a family unit.

The agency has developed an independence strategy to support children's future, which starts when children reach the age of 14 years old. This helps professionals to involve children in planning ahead for their future and includes supporting children with activities such as learning to drive. This helps to provide children with a sense of achievement and helps them to have a sense of purpose.

Supervising social workers maintain involvement with the fostering families who continue to provide care when a child reaches 18 years old. This provides an additional layer of support for the foster carers and young adults, particularly with regards to their education, training and employment.

The agency has an exemplary education support service. This helps children to make exceptional progress with their education. The education support service provides children with access to digital learning and careers advice. One social worker said it was a 'huge achievement' that one child was sitting their GCSE exams. All children who were 16 years old at the time of the inspection were attending further education, training or employment, and two young adults have university placements. The support provided to children and young adults helps to significantly improve their life chances.

The agency recognises that childhood trauma can have a negative impact on a child's ability to achieve academically. Therefore, the agency offers children the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the British Exploring Society. Although these opportunities are available to all children, the aim is to provide those children who are less academically able with opportunities to gain experience and develop new skills. This support helps to improve children's learning and development.

Children receive high levels of support to understand their identity. Family support workers liaise with children's social workers to access the children's histories. Where possible, they will contact the child's birth family for information and photos. Family

support workers then share this information sensitively with the child. This child-centred approach helps children to gain a greater understanding of their life story. This helps children to understand their emotions better.

Children can access and enjoy an excellent range of activities, new experiences and social events organised by the agency. Where possible, children's brothers and sisters are invited to attend these. This strengthens children's relationships. Children can participate in a forum which supports them to have input into how the organisation is managed. This includes children interviewing prospective agency social workers and foster carers. This helps children to feel valued.

Children are supported well to maintain contact with their family members. Foster carers regularly support children to visit their family members, often travelling long journeys to ensure these relationships endure. Foster carers provide financial support to children when they visit their families. This supports the family to spend an enjoyable time together and helps the children to feel well cared for and supported.

Children feel listened to. One child asked for a children's breakfast club to be arranged. In addition, younger children have asked for their own youth forum. Both of these requests have been acted on. The agency consults with children annually about the level of care they receive from their foster carers. This helps children to feel listened to.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

Foster carers and agency social workers understand the children's vulnerabilities well and work together to reduce risks for children. Risk assessments and children's care plans are regularly updated when new risks emerge or when risks reduce. Risks associated with going missing from home, self-harming behaviours and child exploitation have significantly reduced. The support that the agency provides to children helps to keep children increasingly safe.

Allegations and complaints made by children, foster carers and professionals are responded to quickly and investigated appropriately. Children are informed of the outcomes of investigations and foster carers are well supported through the process. The agency makes relevant referrals if there are safeguarding concerns, including to the DBS where appropriate.

The agency ensures that all incidents are reviewed and evaluated by the registered manager and the staff. There is a clear focus on the agency learning from incidents to prevent further occurrence and potential harm to children.

Foster carers are provided with therapeutic parenting training. This helps foster carers to respond well to children when they become upset. The agency refers children for specialist support when necessary. Foster carers have the option to complete a diploma in therapeutic parenting to further develop their knowledge and

skills. Foster carers speak positively about the accessibility and quality of the training available through the comprehensive online training database. This training helps to improve foster carers' skills and consequently helps them to provide an enhanced level of care to children.

The agency's social workers challenge the practice of foster carers when necessary. This includes ensuring that foster carers complete mandatory training. Significant support is provided by the agency to ensure that foster carers meet the high expectations that the agency has of them. In exceptional circumstances, foster carers fail to meet these high standards. In such situations, foster carers are returned to panel to consider their suitability to continue to be registered with the agency. This helps to ensure that children receive the high level of skilled care that they require.

Foster carers report feeling exceptionally well supported by the agency. The agency offers a buddy system for foster carers who are new to the role. Peer support gatherings, such as breakfast clubs, afternoon teas, walks, and single carers' support groups, are provided. One foster carer said, 'I prefer this agency's ethos. They put the child at the centre of everything.'

Children feel equally well supported by the agency. Foster carers and agency social workers advocate well on behalf of the children on the issues that are important to them, such as spending time with their families. One child said:

[Name of foster carer] and [Name of agency social worker] have done so much for me. I needed contact sorting with my mam and my foster carer and they sorted it for me.'

Family support workers liaise with education professionals to share effective strategies to support children with their behaviour. This helps to provide children with a consistent level of support across all areas of their lives and helps to prevent disruption to children's learning.

The registered manager is proactive in preventing unplanned endings for children. She consults well with the agency's therapeutic lead. They use a trauma-informed approach while considering child development theory and consider what support the child and the foster carer may need in the future. The aim is to pre-empt crisis situations. This approach helps to prevent the breakdown of the relationship between a foster carer and a child and improves children's sense of security and safety.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

The registered manager and her team are inspirational. The registered manager is extremely well supported by her team manager and they share the same ambitious vision. Leaders and managers and the staff have the highest expectations for children's achievements and aspire for them to have the very best experiences.

The registered manager leads by example and provides a strong, supportive environment for the stable staff team and the foster families. One member of staff described the agency as 'well led, well managed, well supported and well administered'. Another member of staff said, 'I could not imagine being in a team where I feel more supported.' A foster carer referred to the staff as 'compassionate and dedicated'. The registered manager is innovative in their ideas to sustain and improve the quality of care that children receive.

The fostering panel is thorough in its discussions, which are well documented and recorded. The agency decision-maker has suitable knowledge and experience for the role. The functions and responsibilities of the panel to adhere to timescales are met and recorded appropriately. The agency decision-maker said, 'This panel does well, which others could learn from.'

Staff and foster carers receive regular supervision sessions. Supervision is reflective in nature and practice. The fostering families and the children are at the centre of discussions. Timescales for actions are clear and there is good reference to staff support and personal development plans, with targets recorded.

The manager facilitates a number of meetings with the agency social workers to discuss practice issues and the care of the children. This helps the staff to understand the wider network of fostering families in the agency and the presenting needs of the children. Staff are able to discuss, reflect and evaluate practice. As a result, the foster carers are able to speak to anyone in the agency and will receive an informed response.

The manager proactively seeks to involve parents in the lives of children where possible and also to get feedback. Feedback is exceptionally positive. There is a theme that children's families feel that foster carers have all made significant positive differences to the lives of the children in their care.

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

### **Recommendations**

- The registered person should ensure that foster carers are able to evidence that the training, support and development standards have been attained within 12 months of approval (or within 18 months for family and friends foster carers). ('Fostering services: national minimum standards', 20.3)

### **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:** SC036188

**Registered provider:** Reach-Out Care Limited

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

**Responsible individual:** Anna Tchaikovsky

**Registered manager:** Rebecca Stratton

**Telephone number:** 01325 638110

### **Inspector**

Julia Hagan, Social Care Inspector

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